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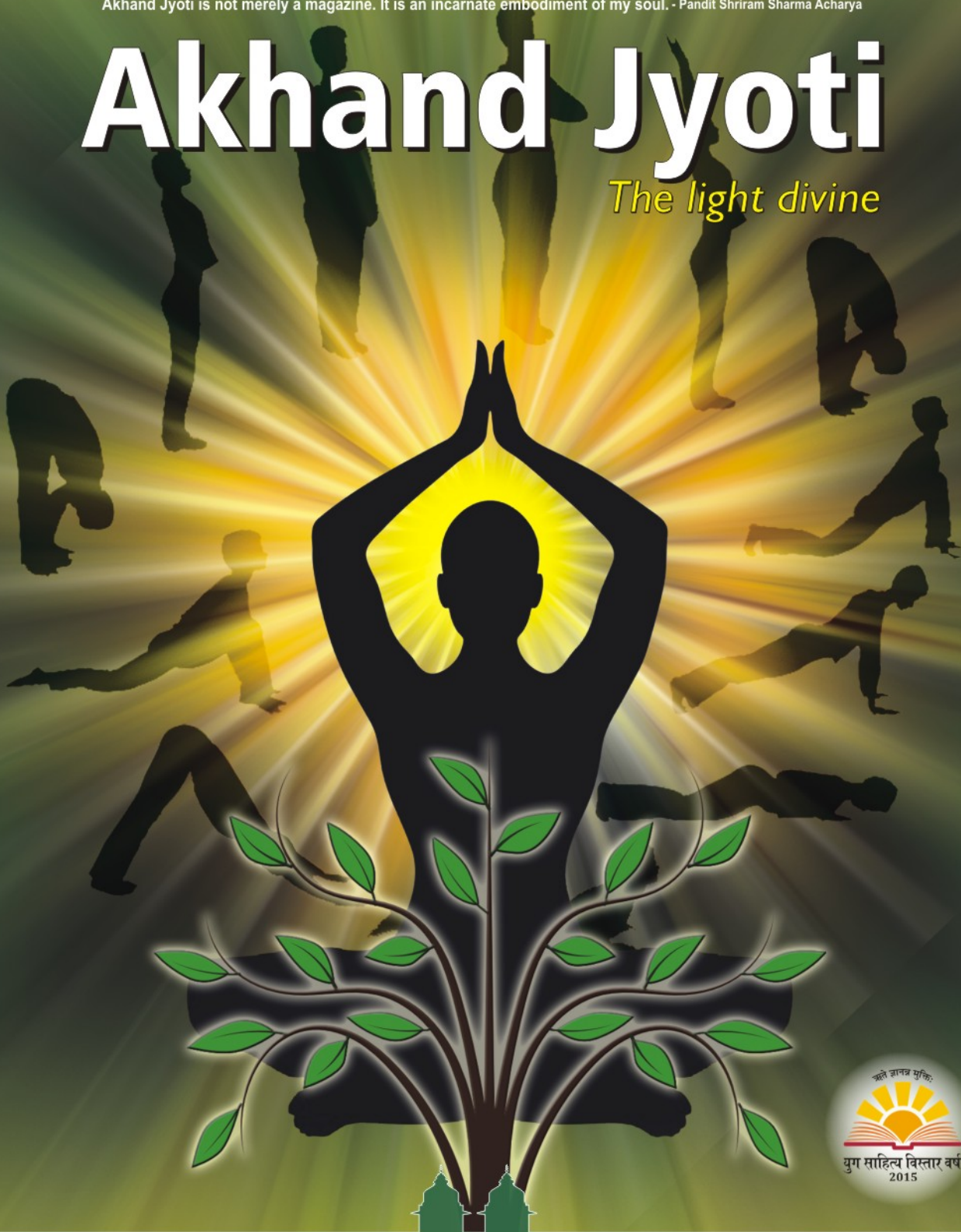
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Akhand Jyoti is not merely a magazine. It is an incarnate embodiment of my soul. - Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya

Akhand Jyoti

The light divine



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Mass awakening rally organized by Shantikunj, Haridwar on the eve of International Yoga Day (IYD) and the practice of prescribed Yogasanas for the day

॥Om bhūrbhuvāḥ svaḥ tatsaviturvareṇyaṁ bhargo devasya dhīmahi dhiyo yo naḥ prachodayāt ॥
(May Almighty illuminate our intellect and inspire us towards the righteous path)

- Rigveda 3/62/10; Samveda 1462, Yajurveda 3/35, 22/9, 30/2, 36/3



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Amrit Chintan

Guru (Spiritual Teacher)-Shishya (Disciple) Relationship

“He [Sri Ramakrishna] looked just like an ordinary man, with nothing remarkable about him. He used the most simple language, and I thought, ‘Can this man be a great teacher?’ I crept near him and asked him the question which I had been asking others all my life: ‘Do you believe in God, sir?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘How can you?’ ‘Because I see Him just as I see you here, only in a much more intense sense.’ That impressed me at once. For the first time I found a person who dared to say that he saw God, that religion was a reality, to be felt, to be sensed in an infinitely more intense way than we can sense the world. I began to go to that man, day after day, and I actually saw that religion could be given. One touch, one glance, can change a whole life.”

“This quickening impulse cannot be derived from books. The soul can receive impulses only from another soul, and from nothing else. We may study books all our lives, we may become very intellectual, but in the end we find that spiritually we have not developed at all. . . .The person from whose soul such an impulse comes is called the *Guru*, the spiritual teacher; and the person to whose soul the impulse is conveyed is called the *Shishya*, the disciple.”

- Swami Vivekananda

Dhyanamoolam Gurur Moortihi, Poojamoolam Guroh Padam |

Mantramoolam Guror Vaakyam, Moksha Moolam Guru Krupa | |

(The Guru's form is the best to meditate upon; the Guru's feet are the best for worship; the Guru's word is the mantra; the Guru's Grace is the bestower of liberation.)

On the Auspicious Parva of Guru Poornima, Akhand Jyoti - The Light Divine Team

Salutes Poojya Gurudev Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya

Let no man in the world live in delusion. Without a Guru none can cross over to the other shore.

- Guru Nanak

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He alone teaches who has something to give, for teaching is not talking, teaching is not imparting
doctrines, it is communicating.

- Swami Vivekananda

Guru is The Guide of Inner Search

*Nata yayo sripatitam samiyu kadachidapyasu daridra varya |
Mookascha vachaspatitam hi tabhyam, namo nama sri guru padukabyam |*

-Guru Paduka Stotram (3rd Shloka)

(Meaning: My prostrations to the holy sandals of my Guru, adoring which the worst poverty-stricken have turned out to be great possessors of wealth, and even the mutes have turned out to be great masters of speech.)

Guru-shishya (Spiritual Teacher - Disciple) tradition is as old as our culture. It is this tradition that has molded several great men. The majority of miraculous feats that have been recorded in golden letters on the pages of history are nothing but the record of the harmony of the dignified mentorship of Guru and the disciplined effort of the disciple. As the disciple becomes blessed by getting an authentic Guru so also the Guru is rewarded by finding a disciplined and energetic disciple.

What is the difference between Guru and teacher? Guru imparts *Vidya* (spiritual knowledge) while the teacher imparts *Shiksha* (mundane education). It is the difference between *Vidya* and *Shiksha* that distinguishes Guru from teacher. A teacher gives information that is useful in the materialistic life of a person. But this is not enough for learning the art of living. This will not be sufficient to make a person rise above the mundane life and understand the true meaning of life. A teacher disseminates knowledge and a guru imparts understanding. It is easy to impart mundane education, but when it comes to understanding and experiencing inner reality of life, then the ordinary information does not prove to be useful. There is then a compelling need felt for a Guru who has a holistic understanding of life and recognizes the true goal of life. Guru is one who not only knows about the problems in the path of life but also has the capability to solve them.

Guru is not merely a person; he is the epicenter of spiritual energy. This energy not only cleanses the impurities, but also uproots the *samskaras* (deep-rooted impressions) in the *chitta* (psyche) of his disciple, so that he could tread the inner path. The reach of the mundane teacher is limited to the external and visible world. Only a true Guru can make you look inside your inner-self.

The Status of a true Guru is bestowed by the Grace of God. For someone to become a Guru, he has to pass through multiple levels of hurdles and prove himself to be capable. The pathos of the present day is that anyone who wears saffron clothes, sports a vermilion on the forehead,

A guru is a God-knowing person who has been divinely appointed by Him to take the seeker as a disciple and lead him from the darkness of ignorance to the light of wisdom.

- Paramhansa Yogananda

wears a rudraksha mala, and holds a *kamandal* claims to be a 'guru'. Such people are doing this only to assert their ego and in the greed for some gain. The innocent public is drawn into illusion by this external paraphernalia and considers these people as real 'gurus'.

The so-called gurus steeped in ego and selfishness dig a ditch for themselves and end up pulling those also who follow them. Such a guru neither ends up doing good for himself nor to his disciples. This has been the primary reason for the decline of the glorious tradition of *Guru-Shishya*. In the recent years, the country has been flooded with these so-called 'gurus' who do not possess an iota of spiritual wisdom and are themselves submerged in the materialistic desires. When such people claim to be 'gurus', they are just tarnishing the glory of this prestigious word. The relationship between a Guru and disciple originates from knowledge and previous *samskaras*. It is not possible for any guru to choose any disciple. A guru can accept a person as a disciple only when he is linked to him through *samskaras*.

There is a well-known anecdote to drive this point home. Swami Sivananda's disciple Chidanand belonged to South India. He had initially gone to Arunachala and requested Ramana Maharshi to make him his disciple and initiate him. Ramana Maharshi made Chidananda sit near him and looked at him intently. Ramana Maharshi saw a *samskara* in the *chitta* of Chidanand, which was not linking with him but was linking with Swami Sivananda. He told Chidanand - 'I am not your guru. Your guru is in North India. There is Swami Sivananda there who will give you Guru Diksha. I am able to see your linkage with him.' Later Chidanand attained *Guru Diksha* through Swami Sivananda.

A guru accepts a disciple straight from his heart. Using the power of his penance, he uproots all the worldly *samskaras* embedded within the *chitta* of the disciple. Each guru has his own method of cleansing and they do this in their own way. Until this process has been completed, the guru continues to be associated with the disciple. The guru gets liberated only after he has liberated the disciple from all his bondages and evil *samskaras*. Until then, even the guru is not liberated. A guru sees the past, present and the future of the disciple and initiates him based on this. Before Swami Vivekananda chose his disciples, he would hold the hand of the person and enter into a state of meditation. In meditation, he would intuitively see the past, present and future of the person. He would look at those subtle *samskaras* in his *chitta* that are likely to create hurdles in his spiritual progress. He would choose a mantra which is best suited for removing those obstacles and aid him in reaching higher realms of consciousness and initiate him with that mantra.

It is true that Swamiji did not make too many disciples because he was aware of the huge responsibilities associated with a guru. Majority of the karma of a disciple is borne by the guru. Only a miniscule left out part remains for the disciple to workout. A guru draws such a line in the life of the disciple that there is no more karma that gets accumulated henceforth. On the

**Guru is Shiva sans his three eyes, Vishnu sans his four arms, Brahma sans his four heads.
He is *param* Shiva himself in human form.**

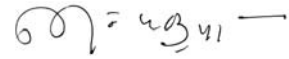
- *Brahmanda Puran*

other hand, *prarabdha karma* continues to reduce. This is what makes the disciple understand true purpose of life and becomes capable of crossing the ocean of *samsara*. This role of a guru clearly separates him from a teacher. In the present times, there is an imminent need to maintain the glory of the guru-tradition unblemished and also develop the right understanding of the word in the minds of general public. Only then will we be able to teach our next generation about the true meaning and grandeur of the role of a guru.

July 31, 2015 happens to be the sacred *Parva* of Guru Poornima. This day is considered to be very significant in Indian Culture and the spiritual world. Traditionally, this *Parva* is celebrated to augment and strengthen the faith and devotion of the disciple in his guru – the spiritual teacher. When the consciousness of guru energizes the inner psyche of the disciple, the latter becomes capable of achieving anything. However, every task of the guru is unique and strange and his wish and love are also extraordinary. It is this wish that makes the disciple attain great heights. Only a dedicated disciple can fulfill the wish of an Enlightened Guru and this task is possible only by keeping the spirit of total surrender, which alone attracts the love of *Guru*.

May this *Guru Poornima* bring in the lives of all of us, *Pragya Parijans*, the intense aspiration, faith and devotion to fulfill the wish of our *Gurudev* – ushering in of a new era of love, light and bliss – so that we get his love and blessings.

With Prayer-filled Guru Poornima Greetings,



(Pranav Pandya)

*Brahmaanandam Parama Sukhadam, Kevalam Jnaana Murtim /
Dvandvaa Teetam Gagana Sadrisham, Tatvam Asyaadi Lakshyam ||
Ekam Nityam Vimalam Achalam, Sarvadhee Saakshi Bhutam /
Bhavaateetam Triguna Rahitam, Sadgurum Tam Namaami ||*

Meaning: A true Guru experiences the Supreme Bliss of *Brahmaananda* (transcendental divine bliss). He enjoys and confers Supreme joy. He is beyond space and time. He is the embodiment of wisdom which is the basis for all types of knowledge. He transcends the pair of opposites (such as joy and sorrow, profit and loss). He is more Omnipresent than space itself. He is One without a second (*ekam*). He never changes under any circumstances (*nityam*). He is without any type of impurity (*vimalam*). He is steady and motionless (*achalam*). He is the witness of everything. He transcends mental comprehension and verbal explanation. He is beyond the three *gunas* (*satva*, *rajas* and *tamas*). I offer my humble salutations to such a Guru who possesses all these qualities.

Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth.

- *Bhagvad Gita*

Inner Beauty is the Real Beauty

The word beauty fills the heart with pleasure, the eyes eager to see something new and exclusively appealing as if satisfied with warmth of the sight. Beauty is admired by one and all on earth. When it is concerning matrimony it is indispensable. Every bride dreams for a man with good qualities along with an attractive personality whereas the bridegroom hunts for a woman who is beautiful, fair complexioned and well trained in household chores. Woman thus takes extra care to appear beautiful throughout the lifetime.

The measure of beauty differs from place to place and religion to religion. It doesn't always mean tall, lean proportional body and fair complexion with sharp features. In some places long neck, long and big ear holes, small feet and even heavy-body women are considered beautiful. Such measures of beauty become part and practice of the regional people irrespective of how women achieve it.

In Myanmar (Burma), the *Kayan Lahwi tribes* consider long neck as a measure of beauty of women. Accordingly, girls are forced to wear bronze rings around the neck from a tender age of five years. The number of rings is increased with age so as to get a long neck resembling neck of a defined earthen pot. The rings restrict the movement of neck and are painful. But all this pain is borne just to get a

long neck different from the one which is created by God.

In some parts of Southern Africa especially Nigeria and Mauritania, bride's zero figure or a proportionate sleek physique is overtaken by a fat woman with lots of pounds. Here man prefers fat and healthy women with huge physique ideal for marriage. Fat women are considered fit and fine life partners. Hence young girls and women are conscious to keep themselves fat. Parents also take extra care to feed their daughters in such a way that they put on lots of weight. They insist on excess feeding to fulfill the requirement. Because of this, many times young girls fall sick and feel unhealthy but no one cares, neither their parents nor the young men. Again God's law is violated for excess fatty body.

In China, during the period between 10th and 19th century, small feet were admired as a measure of beauty of women. To stop the natural growth of feet, at the bubbling age of six years, girls had to undergo foot-binding. After foot-binding the feet grew only by four to five inches. It was a process in which the girl child of about six years had to undergo bearing tremendous pain. First of all the feet nails were trimmed and then the feet were dipped in some medicinal-herbal solution. After massaging the feet for some time the little toes were pulled hard enough to break

It is amazing how complete is the delusion that beauty is goodness.

- Leo Tolstoy

the bones. Then these lifeless toes were turned towards the ankle and binding process began. A one inch broad and ten feet long rope was wrapped around the feet in such a way that the feet don't get the space to grow further. The girl grew up with so-called beautiful feet, undergoing all the torture to her feet. This torture often led to disability to walk and many other problems. Somehow this tradition has now been stopped but for a millennium young girls and women were forced to bear this suffering just to be called beautiful.

In Kenya, on Masai island the measure of beauty is still different. Here big, long, dangling ears are considered beautiful. After normal ear piercing girls wear stones or elephant teeth to elongate the ear and its hole. In Ethiopia, the Karo tribe follows yet another measure for beauty. Here the number of scars woman carries on the body is identification of her beauty; more the number of scars, more beautiful the lady. Here women undergo many painful and terrifying processes to have large number of scars to be called beautiful.

In New Zealand, the Maori community is fond of tattoos. They tattoo all over the body

including the face. The tattoos made on face are called Ta Moko. These tattoos reveal a large number of stories, hierarchy, traditions or rules and regulations of the tribe and also the information regarding the identity. Tattoos here decide the social status and are also the measure of beauty.

In the Solomon Island, in South Pacific, the Kamba community believes to have evolved from alligators. They regard alligators as their ancestors and so is the measure of beauty related to it, which is to look like alligators. Women make marks on the body using red hot heated iron rods to resemble alligators. More the scale-like marks on the body, more beautiful is the woman.

In spite of all the measures of beauty prevailing in the society, the fact is that external beauty is not the only parameter. Beauty is God's gift. It cannot measure the goodness of the person. It is actually the inner soul which makes a person beautiful. Good thoughts, deeds, emotions and good conduct make a person special irrespective of the form of the physique.

For Attractive lips, speak words of kindness.
For lovely eyes, seek out the good in people.
For a slim figure, share your food with the hungry.
For beautiful hair, let a child run their fingers through it once a day.
For poise, walk with the knowledge that you never walk alone.
People, more than things, have to be restored, renewed, revived, reclaimed, and redeemed.
Remember, if you ever need a helping hand, you will find one at the end of each of your arms.
As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands,
One for helping yourself and the other for helping others.

-Sam Levenson

Beauty is not in the face; beauty is a light in the heart.

- Kahlil Gibran

Education & Society: Present Scenario

[Review of the past journey of education system in the previous issue shows that by and large, it is shaped according to the purpose and relevance of education in a society. History has also witnessed that in several ways, education significantly influences the development and future of the society. Here we shall discuss these issues in terms of the trends, needs, and contributions of education in today's society.]

Progressive journey of human society has witnessed education as a transmitter of civilization, encompassing almost every facet of life – moral, cultural, ethical, social, economic, political, and so on.... In the present times, it has become a key source of developing human beings into human resources.

The nature and role of education expand and transform with increasing levels of development and accompanying socio-economic and political changes. The last phase of the 20th century was the gateway of a social and economic revolution which triggered transformation of the developing world to help build thriving, and prosperous societies. Today, when the world's economies are knowledge-based, education is an integral part of the multidimensional progress. As remarked by former American president Lyndon Johnson – “We have entered an age in which education is not just a luxury permitting some men and women an advantage over others. It has become a necessity without which a person is defenceless in this complex, industrialized society [...]; we have truly entered the century of the educated men and women”.

Since the advent of western intellectual and industrial revolutions in modern civilization, development is predominantly associated with economic progress, scientific and technological advancement, expansion and modernization of physical resources and raising the standard of living. Human-resource development too is largely confined to produce skilled professionals, and trained men and women to meet the specialized needs of industrial growth, efficient administrative services, and commercial business management, etc. Literature, art, cultural activities, sports, etc too are part of the education system but, are pursued as creative hobbies or extra-curricular activities by majority of the students.

Education in the developed as well as developing countries is primarily imparted through curricula-based formal teaching and training at elementary (primary and secondary schools) and higher (university) levels. In countries like India where large proportion of the masses are still illiterate, specialized literacy programmes are run as major government schemes; non-government social

Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel.

- Socrates

organizations also render significant contributions and support in this regard.

Elementary school education lays the foundation of multi-faceted development of the young children and hence of the future of a society. Educating the children is like planting the seeds of progress.

Barring some exceptions and variations in the difference in duration and mode of teaching and training, the curricula of school-education across the globe mostly revolve around the 3Rs – to make the children capable of reading, writing and doing arithmetic. Introduction to essentials of Civics, History and Moral discipline too are parts of the syllabi, in general. In progressive societies, school schedule has provision for physical fitness training and sports as well. Communication skills, creative interests and talents of the students are nurtured via organization of debate, essay and other competitions, dance, drama, and fine arts training programmes. Excursion tours and environment-awareness programmes organized in some advanced schools help the children interact and develop intimacy with Nature and also help generate awareness about preserving its harmonies. However, such programmes need to expand in a more inclusive manner in other parts of the society.

In spite of its limitations, the formal school education system does contribute to grooming children's personality and to social-development. In the modern society, where the trend of nuclear families is on rise and parents are often too occupied with hectic schedules, by and large, elementary schools

have become the first and foremost centres of exposure to and experience of 'socialization'. It is the first place, where a child gets an opportunity to communicate, play, and eat with several fellow beings and also collectively learn, share and compete with them. The curricula of the school, its extracurricular activities and the informal relationships amongst students and teachers instil social skills and values. Through various activities a school imparts discipline, obedience, honesty, co-operation, fair play, etc.

Education also serves the purpose of cultural transmission in all societies. In developed countries and ultra-urban societies elsewhere, schools also become a prime mechanism for inculcating in young members of society a general knowledge and acceptance of the established socio-cultural system.

To a great extent, in every country, the centres of primary education also foster social integration, patriotism and national unity. For example, directly through textbooks and indirectly through celebration of cultural programmes patriotic sentiments are instilled. The nation's past is glorified, its legendary heroes are respected, and its global ventures are justified.

Education is a multi-faceted process of socialization. Education acts as an integrative force in a society by cultivating the values that unite different sections of the society. The family may fail to provide the child the essential knowledge and experience of the social skills and norms of the wider society. Indeed, in several respects children's schools do a greater social and national service that

Wisdom is not a product of schooling but of the lifelong attempt to acquire it.

- Albert Einstein

their families cannot. For example, it is a school/centre of education that can give an opportunity and encourage the students to respect and mix with people of different socio-cultural/ethnic backgrounds and religious faiths.

As the ambience of family and parents' conduct influence the child's tender mind, similarly the personalities, behavior and mannerism, the general ambience in the school, etc also have strong impact on the child's mind. The impact of this 'hidden curricula' of school, is more intense in the situations when in his awakened state the child spends more time at school than at his home.

Primary and secondary schools also offer first systemic exposure to self-experience and help nurturing a child's growth, grooming his/her inborn talents, etc.

At formal secondary school level in general, emphasis is laid on curricula-based teaching, training, problem-solving and ranking the students according to performance in the exams. In primary schools, usually the entire class is encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activities organized by the schools. In secondary schools, the students opt for these as per their choice and inclination. Formal secondary level education also imparts to students more specific knowledge and skills required by the changing socio-economic system, scientific and technological development, etc. It lays the foundation of future career and social role of the students. In the middle-class societies in developing countries like India, educational attainment

also becomes an important criterion for social status.

Schools are the settings in which students develop a variety of interpersonal skills needed for entering into friendship, participating in community affairs, and relating to others in workplace. Besides, the age segregation of the students in school environment encourages the formation of youth subcultures.

Education also plays vital role in mass-awareness about duties of the citizens and their constitutional rights and strengthens fair political practices. Mahatma Gandhi regarded literacy of the voters as essential for the success of democratic system and in strengthening national development. Indeed, as observed in the developed democratic countries like USA, literacy allows full participation of the people in democratic processes and effective voting. It should be the mission of education to empower every student to learn, to achieve success, and to participate responsibly to his/her fullest potential in strengthening national unity and development.

Education and Development:

Confucius said "Education builds confidence, confidence gives hope, and hope gives peace". This potential of education must be harnessed, as peace is essential for sustainable development across the globe.

In the colonial times, education system focused at producing trained and skilled staff to assist the government machinery and support administrative services. With gradual

To educate a person in the mind but not in morals is to educate a menace to society.

- Theodore Roosevelt

progress of scientific investigations, specialized laboratories were opened; but it did not have any widespread influence on the society and hence not on education system, because, as in the case of creative skills and arts, only a few 'gifted/talented' or 'highly inclined and capable students/aspirants' used to study/master these. Most significant turning point in the education system occurred after the industrial revolution and consequent changes in the needs and aspirations of the society.

Until the last century or so, no society could afford more than a handful of highly educated people. With the emergence of large-scale industrial and bureaucratic organizations, came the need for an abundant supply of literate and educated people. The school system became a primary vehicle by which a nation's citizens were taught the three Rs, and the higher education became the custodian of nation's intellectual capital. The 3Es essential for social and national development and consequent improvement of standard of living are - Education, Economy and Energy. Education today is a crucial investment in the economy and major economic resources.

Influence of industrial revolution and economic growth in different parts of the world continues to require especially trained skilled manpower and efficient managers. So the curricula of higher education are mostly designed to cater to these requirements. Along with the increased demand for professionals in science and technology, the need for teachers, academicians, researchers and scholars also rose to keep abreast with the rapid growth of knowledge and development across the world.

In both modernizing and modernized societies, education plays a significant role in social reforms. In human history many revolutions and reforms were the products of educational institutions. In modern democratic societies, higher levels of formal education are associated with higher levels of social, economic development and greater involvement and improvements in the political system as well.

Education, in profound sense of the word, is a process of consciousness-raising aimed at human liberation. It has far-reaching implications not only in improving the standards of living but also in refining the standards of life. Has any society of today made substantial efforts on these aspects of education?

In spite of the great contributions and potentials of education in development at personal and social levels, and in nation building, there are several limitations, lacunae, and challenges. We shall address these in the successive articles with discussion on different perspectives and prospects on possible solutions to march towards real development.

You may grow old and trembling in your anatomies, you may lie awake at night listening to the disorder of your veins, you may miss your only love, you may see the world about you devastated by evil lunatics, or know your honor trampled in the sewers of baser minds. There is only one thing for it then — to learn. Learn why the world wags and what wags it. That is the only thing which the mind can never exhaust, never alienate, never be tortured by, never fear or distrust, and never dream of regretting. Learning is the only thing for you. — T. H. White

Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another.

- Gilbert K. Chesterton

The Sun & the Human Brain

The physical as well as the subtle body of the Sun has been given special mention in the Vedic texts in the context of human life. Vigor of the body and illumination of the intellect, both are said to have direct linkage with this cosmic source.

Physico-chemical effects of the Sun and its vital role in the maintenance of life on the earth are well known to us. Novel observations are also made in the laboratories on its effect on vitality. If a sapling receives proper water supply and fertilizers but no sunlight, it certainly dies in a few days. If sunlight is allowed to reach it partially and indirectly (after filtering or refraction through a colored glass for instance,) it might survive and grow into a tree, but it won't blossom with its natural flowers and fruits. Observations on several crops of pulses, vegetables and fruits have revealed that the reception and absorption of natural sunlight is essential for the health and taste of the natural eatable products. These results make us rethink about the ancient scientific hypothesis that taste and vitality of natural products have roots in the planetary and cosmic effects.

Further, as is also successfully demonstrated by the *yogis*, using sublime consciousness force of focused mind, one might attract specific elements from specific 'energy domains' in the cosmos. Vedic texts sometimes refer the vital

energy of the Sun by the name "*gau*". It is said that this *gau* is essential for natural strength and energy in every element of physical manifestation of the world. Thus, the human body, being a gigantic ensemble of these elements could, in certain respects, be referred as 'generated' or 'constituted by' the Sun. Therefore, it is natural that healthy functioning of the brain system cannot be sustained without the energy received from the Sun. What is important to note from the Vedic descriptions is that the subliminal force of Savita (subtle body of the Sun) is also a source of vital spiritual energy (*prāṇa*) for normal activities and further evolution of the mind.

Sublimation or ignition of different substances emits different colors (or shades) of light energy. These might appear to be white or light yellow to the naked eyes in general. However, the dispersion of these through a prism would decompose the spectra of constituent colors. Spectroscopic studies reveal that every element emits its unique spectrum of light. For instance, the spectrum of sodium shows bright yellow and that of potassium shows red; the spectrum of calcium disperses red-red, orange-yellow, green-green colors, etc. The study of spectrum enables identification of the substances or recognition of the constituents of a new substance. This intimate relation of a substance with the light spectra explains the Vedic hymns describing

The universe is full of magical things, patiently waiting for our wits to grow sharper.

- Eden Phillpotts

constituents of human body (including brain) as 'made up of' or 'generated by' the Sun, the Moon, etc.

Deeper Facets Described in the Ancient Text:

Let us also look at the optical properties of matter and their scientific analysis from a different angle. The coexistence of light and heat is well known. This is a common observation of how light could be generated from ignition or sublimation of any substance. In ordinary state as well every element emits light radiation, though at a subtle frequency. Recent scientific theories accept the possibility of conversion of light particles into atoms and molecules of physical (material) elements. This mutual conversion of light-energy and matter accounts for unified existence of the physical (perceivable) and subliminal constituents of our mind-body system.

The subtle energy of light is thus supposed to dwell in every element of matter present in our body. As per the widely accepted scientific theories of Physics, light is regarded as certain kind of energy waves. The sublime eternal consciousness force immanent in cosmic energy (and hence in light) is referred in the Upanishads as the flow of the spark of divine powers. Its 'transmission' from different *nakṣatras* (stars, as the word-meaning) is referred there to imply that the nature of light is different from that of the material-elements. Also the word *nakṣatra* has a wider meaning in these Vedic texts. As the detailed deliberations of the Upanishads highlight, this word corresponds to the cosmic centers or domains of dense superposition of subliminal (conscious) energy waves.

The flesh, blood and bones in our body are generated from the *basic elements* of earth and water by different chemical reactions of the material elements. But, the vital energy, intellect, desires, knowledge, and mental inspirations, emotional currents, etc are subliminal in nature. These might influence the hormonal secretions and bioelectrical and biochemical reactions in the body but cannot originate from matter or by any such reactions. These are described in the Upanishads as constituted of the *ākāśa tatva* (ether element).

The *prakāśa tatva* (light-element) is referred as a manifestation of the *ākāśa tatva* with *agnitatva*¹ in energy form. All activities and creativity in the living beings is possible because of *prakāśa tatva*. This *tatva* is dwelling in the cosmos with enormous varieties of natural manifestations. Dissipation of this subliminal light from the body, in the event of death, eventually converts the physical body into an inert piece of matter that disintegrates by the natural process of biodegradation.

It is said that what we eat also contributes to the development of our mind. Here again, it may be noted that, it is not the material substance of the food, rather its natural tendency (in terms of the *triṇaṣas* — innate qualities and sources of functioning of Nature), or in particular, the type (e.g. wavelength) of the *prakāśa tatva* absorbed in it that influences our mental tendencies. The 'nuclei' of the constituent elements of food are therefore regarded (in the allegoric presentation of the scriptures) as the 'atoms' radiated or energized by some *nakṣatra* in the cosmos. These induce specific effects in the physical and the subtle

The greater our knowledge increases, the greater our ignorance unfolds.

- John F. Kennedy

components of a human being. These kinds of transcendental effects are mentioned in the Upanishads as – “the glow of moon existing in the mind [...]”, etc. The physical effects of sunlight and moonlight on the quality of vegetables and food grains, and the effect of the latter on one’s physical and mental health, as studied in the modern laboratories, are perceivable manifestations of the subliminal effects referred in our ancient texts.

Scope for Neuroscience Research:

As modern science proceeds further in elucidating the complexity of gigantic network of the nerves and brain-functions, the knowledge of the influence of other divine (cosmic) powers would also become more transparent. Whatever has been known or studied so far about the brain and the *endocrine* system, supports the intrinsic vision of reality elucidated in the ancient Indian science of Spirituality.

Neuroscientists identify two types of nerves in the highly interconnected network of the nervous system – sympathetic and parasympathetic. The sympathetic nerves unite the viscera and blood vessels and pass through the vertebral column. These are supposed to contribute to metabolism and harmonious distribution of the *endocrine* secretions. Continuous flow of purified blood is regulated via these nerves. These also contribute to the regular process of excretion as well as efficient operations of the healing of the injured parts of the body, etc. When the nerves of the parasympathetic system (*suṣumnā prāṇālī*) relax, the sympathetic system conducts the repair and maintenance process at the cellular and organ levels.

Auto-regulatory functions and stochastic connectivity of the complex network of

neurons is unique in the human beings. Other organisms do not possess such an evolved system of communication and ‘intelligent control’ through nerves.

Scientific investigations into the origin and the source of power of the nerves (neurons) have shown that their functional center lies in the brain. Memory layers have been identified as the bundles of fibers connecting and conveying the impulses of sensation and motion between the brain, spinal cord, *ganglionic* organs and other parts of the body. Recent investigations in psychology and neurology reveal that the emotional impulses are more dominating in triggering the nerve-functions as compared to the more familiar (extensively studied) role of the bioelectrical signal processing of the sensory and motor operations. These findings have provided newer directions to brain research.

Of late, Psychology has become an integral part of research in Neuroscience conducted at several reputed laboratories. It is now an acceptable notion of medical sciences that one could sustain good health and vigor by cultivating positive thinking and purity of thoughts and emotions. Apart from the psychological remedies such as biofeedback, confession, healing, etc., for -- elimination of the vices and weaknesses of the mind, restraint from passions, and creative orientation of aspirations, are also advised towards psychosomatic treatments.

Active collaboration between research on the psychological and neuro-chemical fronts has revealed important effects of the subliminal currents of consciousness on the neuronal system.

There is for me powerful evidence that there is something going on behind it all. . . It seems as though somebody has fine-tuned nature’s numbers to make the Universe. . . The impression of design is overwhelming.

- Physicist Paul Davies

Recording of the changes in the brain impulses and the spectrum of the emission through the ganglions with the intensity of willpower – are among the remarkable results in this direction.

Sympathetic nerves are referred as ‘negatively charged’ in terms of the impact of emotions on bioelectrical currents. These are said to manifest the effects of the soft sentiments of feminine nature. A huge bundle of these nerves emerges from near the heart. The subliminal core of the heart is also described as the emotional center or the ocean of sentiments of a person. This system of nerves is therefore of significant importance in Psychology. Deeper understanding of the science of aspirations, intrinsic experiences, as well as that of the neuro-physiological and other brain functions demands extensive research on the vast range of the functions and sublime sensitivity of the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems.

Pains and pleasures of the body, mind and the heart (sentimental core) are experienced by the brain via its consciousness faculties (mind). A lot remains to be deciphered about the subliminal powers of consciousness expressed or hidden in this core. With the realization of the infinite-order complexity of the human mind, the brain-scientists have now begun to accept its limitless potentials and its intrinsic linkage with cosmic consciousness. The importance of spirituality is also getting recognized and the need for research in the ancient Indian sciences (of Yoga and Ayurveda) is being felt for a comprehensive study of the human mind and the brain system.

Studies are also going on the possible manifestation of the responses of the

unconscious mind in the *cerebrospinal* system. Structurally, the cells in the *cerebrospinal* region appear as tiny bundles of delicate fibers. These tentacles spread along the spinal column serve for all sensory experiences. The subliminal flow of consciousness force along the *suṣumnā nāḍī* is also processed through these fibrous elements. These are said to make a functional linkage between the mind and the heart – by which, the mental impulses are felt in the heart and vice-versa.

Purification and spiritual evolution of mental powers enable upward orientation of the currents of *prāṇa* through these fibers along the *suṣumnā nāḍī*. This gradually activates the unconscious (inner) core of mind and thus helps creative linkage of the individual self with the cosmic self (*Brahm*). Acquisition of the Gnostic Knowledge of the yet undeciphered powers and energy-waves dwelling in the limitless expansion of the cosmos then emerges as a natural consequence.

The *cerebrospinal* region thus seems to contain the *viḥatī dwāra* (door to ultimate evolution) referred in the Aitereya Upanishad. Enlightened yogis who learn to activate and control the *viḥatī dwāra* are able to visualize (know) the invisible space and the infinite depth of the unbounded cosmic expansion without any scientific instrument or spaceship.

Modern research on *cerebrospinal* and *endocrine* systems and deeper aspects of the brain-functions and mind is still far from completion. The science of *yoga* and spirituality could offer excellent support in guiding and accelerating this research. Collaborative research on these ancient sciences would also help decipher the extrasensory powers of the human mind.

It seems to me that when confronted with the marvels of life and the universe, one must ask why and not just how. The only possible answers are religious.

- Arthur L. Schawlow

Let *Imaginations* Turn into *Reality*

Imagination is the world that dwells in our subconscious mind. It often tries to connect with the real life. It keeps reminding of its presence by flashing on the inner mind (on and off) time and again. The wings of imagination travel through the mind both in the past and the present but cast its impact and impression on the present. This on and off effect diverts the present life.

Imagination can produce both kinds of effects - positive as well as negative. The positive ones lay the foundation of a golden future cherished in the heart. It extends a helping hand and pulls us ahead towards a happy and contented life. It also enhances the level of creativity. Each imagination is in-fact a new creation. The new creation helps in planning step-wise program towards the dream. Inspirations can also be gained from others experiences.

The new positive thought in the imagination directs and diverts the present life molding it in such a way that new pathways become apparently visible. This activates the mind and fills the life with new zest and zeal. The dreamy imagination now rules the mind and life too. One may reach the destination or not is a different issue, but the new positive thought sets us to go to a higher level towards the desired goal. To dream with open eyes means to see our imagination becoming true in the present. Its becoming true is uncertain

but still wandering down the dreamy lane is an experience making things visible. It provides a platform to our dreams. It helps in planning the procedure towards our destination.

In imagination, the dreamy moments are very tender, delicate but crucial. It fills the heart with joy and pleasure. The tiresome life with the load of tension is replaced by a relaxed and peaceful mind. It helps believe that nothing is impossible. Everything can be achieved. Heights can be conquered. This widens our vision. The capability and capacity elevates and roars to achieve. It's time to judge oneself before the actual flight of upliftment takes off.

A kite with a short string can fly only low in the sky. It can't explore the sky. But a kite with a long and strong string soars high up in the sky and wanders fearlessly exploring the sky. In the same way intense thinking and free thinking give way to new imaginations and creations which help set our lives in motion. Mature and developed minds generate positive thoughts with intense impact so as to ignite the mind. These ignited minds lead a successful life and are highly developed personalities.

Imagination and creativity go hand in hand. Both impart positive results. When we dream of successful and contented life, our plan to fulfill it is in accordance with the efforts required to archive it. The vice versa is also

Logic will get you from A to Z; imagination will get you everywhere.

- Albert Einstein

true. If we do not imagine, we do not dream, we do not plan life goes on aimlessly. Weak imaginations weaken the foresight. It can never achieve any goal.

Imagination is the real cause of all the development taking place around the world. Imaginary thoughts when analyzed, knowledge implied, planned out with skill, lead to innovations. Imaginations take true form and become the reality of life. The imaginary identity gives way to reality. Vision 2020 is one such imagination of our ex-President Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam who has dreamt of a new India. This has inspired the Indian masses with new insight and vision and encouraged the masses to work for its realization.

The other phase of imagination is illusion - a false dream. Tempting, pleasing but only momentary just like the milkmaid of Myriad who dreamt a lot but soon repents as the milk pot descends down shattering the big dream. Only imaginations do not work. They are illusions. Imaginations to be turned into a reality need time and patience and unnumbered attempts. They do not come true all by themselves. As a seed needs to be sown in proper soil and nurtured until it becomes a plant; similarly the imagination needs exhaustive energy, hard labour, courage and high tempo to make it a reality.

Psychologists too believe that imaginations play an active role in transforming lives. Hence, children are often asked questions like "What would you like to be when you grow up?", "How have you planned your future?" One who thinks appropriately sets a goal and toils to achieve it and is successful in the long

run. Those who can't decide, can't imagine, can't plan, can't set a goal, don't move in the appropriate direction and finally fail in life. They only see the dark side of every aspect due to the negativity filled in them. They are unable to give up the memories of past failures and are at a loss in the present too.

Creative imaginations cheer a person both inside and the outer periphery. A research has proved that a person with creative imaginations regarding the future lives long life in comparison to others. Therefore, to lead a happy and contented life one should dream of a golden future and chase it until achieved.

Imagination: A necessity

To be influenced by emotions and imaginations, is a desirable characteristic of human brain. He can be considered an animal who remains satisfied with whatever situation he is thrown in, and does not feel a need to visualize rosy pictures of a glorious future. Wit or wisdom, in fact is a refined form of vision only. If you intend to start a business, your imagination will create a mental picture of your successful business with all minute details like: the benefits to be derived, places where customers are located, where to find the cheapest raw materials and best time to buy and store it, seasonal patterns of high and low sales volumes, etc. Thus, the entire business plan is visualized before starting the actual activity. With proper decision making skills and little refining based on experience, this mere imagination can be made into a grand successful project. But a mind without such imagination will keep on toiling hard in the rut of life, nothing more than that.

- Acharya Shriram Sharma

Happy are those who dream dreams and are willing to pay the price to make them come true.

- Anonymous

In the Ashram of Maharshi Ramana – 2

Initial Introduction

After everyone sat down properly, a *Brahmachari* began reciting *Vedmantras* rhythmically. One of the visitors said in between – “It will really be nice, if the meaning of these mantras is also explained.”

Maharshi said – “It is not necessary for the common people to know the meaning of *Vedmantras*. Leave that to scholars. Those who perform *Japa* for self-realization, chanting is enough for them. The recitation of *Mantras* is helpful in inducing mental peace and meditation. Their recitation is not for education; it is a procedure, a path to achieve the goal.”

That day Ramana Maharshi asked Shriram only about his well-being; and asked him to remain seated during that afternoon meeting. Frequently he would glance at Shriram and smile. When the meeting was over, Maharshi specifically asked Shriram “Come tomorrow morning”. Maharshi used to sit on a wooden platform that was surrounded by a net from all sides. It was understood that he didn’t like his feet to be touched by others. Whenever someone approached to touch his feet, he would withdraw. This was what his followers felt; though Maharshi never gave any clear direction in this regard.

Next day at 8:30 AM, Shriram sat down in front of the hut of Maharshi. Some more visitors were sitting there. When Maharshi came out, all the people present there got up and greeted him. Once everyone had settled, Maharshi asked the first question from Shriram – “What do you do?” Shriram was not expecting this question; even then he answered – “I am awakening the masses about the glory of our nation and culture. For this purpose I am using my pen and voice.”

“This is not enough – Awaken your inner strength; develop inner effulgence.” After saying this he looked into the eyes of Shriram, as if he were exploring something there. He said again – “You are already doing that. You have the blessings of *Siddha Yogis*. You should continue worshiping the effulgence of Sun. Just take one step forward; and you will find that space has been created for the second.”

Maharshi said further – “People consider that everything can be done by mere striving and movements, etc. They have their own significance, but the power in them comes only through spiritual endeavors. Both Vashishtha and Vishwamitra did *tapa*; then only the demonic terror of Ravana ended. Did Vishnu come on his own to kill Kans? No! The seers did *tapa* to invoke him. If the power of *tapa* is available, the ordinary looking people can accomplish miraculous feats.”

Happiness is your nature. It is not wrong to desire it. What is wrong is seeking it outside when it is inside.

- Ramana Maharshi

The nature of miracles

“Lord! Do you believe in miracles? Do really miracles occur disregarding the law of nature?” – Asked Shriram. Maharshi replied like this – “Nothing should be considered as a miracle in this world. Miracles are nothing but the incidents that cannot be explained due to our own ignorance of the laws of nature.”

Some people sitting there had the experience of miracles. They considered that to be the grace of Maharshi. They appeared to be curious to say something. Maharshi could catch their emotions and said – “In human life something unexpected and sudden too happens. This comes from nowhere; it is the destiny of a concerned person. Yogis, through their effulgence, only prepone or postpone it.”

There were also talks of current affairs, but the main topic of discussion centered on spirituality and *sadhana* for realization. He only answered the questions. Once in a while, the discussion would shift to philosophy, but that used to be only for a short period.

Shriram liked the discipline of the kitchen and dining hall very much. Food used to be simple and *sattvik*. No spices were used. One day during lunch an interesting incident occurred. After serving rice, vegetable, *chatani*, etc, buttermilk, fruits and sweet dish were being served. One European lady brought a spoon with her, as she was not accustomed to eating in Indian style. A volunteer of the ashram wanted to say something; probably he was trying to prevent the lady from using the spoon. Maharshi saw this and indicated to the volunteer silently not to stop her from using

the spoon. Maharshi always took great care of the needs of devotees in the dining hall. During meals, Maharshi used to watch caressingly everyone as the mother does while feeding her children.

Got blessed by Maharshi

That day Maharshi Ramana called Shriram in his hut. Normally he met the devotees together. Even their personal problems were discussed collectively at the gathering. When the message was given to Shriram that Maharshi wished to meet him alone, he was quite surprised. This message was given to him in front of Ganapati Shastri, who had been living there for years. Ganapati Shastri too was amazed to know this. He could only say - “You are going to receive special blessings of Bhagwan.” When this young *sadhak* reached inside the hut of the Maharshi, the latter blessed him by raising his hands, before Shriram could even greet him. Indicating Shriram to sit down, he himself sat down. Without any prologue, he started saying – “There is no specific materialistic aim of your coming here. Only your guiding angel has brought you here. Is it right?”

Shriram nodded his head in acceptance. Maharshi said – “Now recognize, who is that guiding angel? Your own soul shows you the way. He is the teacher and also the disciple.” A moment later he said – “You stopped your *sadhana* for sometime and devoted that time in the freedom movement. There seems no correlation between the two! Isn’t it? But your ambition for freedom of the country and dedicating your efforts for that is also *sadhana*.” Maharshi continued:

Your own Self-Realization is the greatest service you can render the world.

- Ramana Maharshi

"Is it possible to achieve self-realization by merely working for country's freedom?" - Asked Shriram. Maharshi replied - "People have accomplished realization by doing this work alone. Gandhi has achieved his spiritual goal by this *sadhana* alone. His mode of worship is different. Even if he had not done that, he would have achieved *siddhi*. Incessant attention towards a set goal makes the viewpoint of the *sadhak* broad. He gets immersed in his goal. This goal is achieved only by selfless work."

Shriram asked - "Then the spiritual endeavors are not needed for those who are working for freedom?" By asking this question, he wanted to get assured of the spiritual upliftment of the freedom fighters. Maharshi didn't assure him. He said - "Not necessarily - One who remains dedicated to the Supreme Spirit during the struggle will grow spiritually. One should keep himself open to the Supreme Spirit." Through this context, Maharshi wished to express that whatever work is done, its result should be left to the Divine Consciousness. *Sadhak* should go on doing his work with pure and selfless heart. After saying this he became silent.

Inspiration on the hill

Prior to making the ashram at the foot of the hill, Maharshi used to spend most of his time in wandering around Arunachala hill. One day while he was roaming around, he reached a cave. A poisonous snake lived there. Maharshi sat down in front of the cave and started meditating. He was so much engrossed that he forgot about the time. He also couldn't notice that the snake had come

out of its hole in the cave and had coiled itself around his waist, stomach and back. An old woman was collecting the wood on the hill. When she saw this scene, she started making noises.

Maharshi's trance was not broken. That woman now pinched the snake by the sharp tip of the axe she had used for cutting the wood and shouted - Hush! Hush! Due to the touch of axe, the snake left the Maharshi and crawled back into the hole. But the marks were made on the body where the snake had coiled. That woman now pinched the body of the Maharshi by the tip of the same axe. That broke his trance. He started looking at the woman. The woman said angrily - "You will die. You will be nowhere. In this hot summer why don't you stay at one place?"

Maharshi said - "That woman appeared to be untouchable, but she was not ordinary. She was filled with divine consciousness. At one time it also appeared that she was a *Siddha* soul who had done *sadhana* sometime back in Tiruvannamalai." After this incident, Maharshi stopped wandering here and there. He made a hut at the foot of the hill and started living there.

What is the coiling of snake? Why did the snake leave when the woman said 'Hush - Hush'? Had the snake moved according to its nature, it would have bitten either Maharshi or that woman. Clearing these doubts, Maharshi explained the mystery of the snake and the woman with the help of science of yoga. The snake signifies physically the Kundalini Power. That woman was Divine energy and the scolding to stay at one place was the direction to share his light.

Have faith in God and in yourself; that will cure all. Hope for the best, toil for the best and everything will come right for you in the end.

- Ramana Maharshi

Unique moments of spiritual reflections

Shriram stayed in Ramana ashram for four more days. He observed that during *darshan* and contact hours there were discussions on all the religions and the methods of *sadhana*. The prime message of Maharshi matched almost with that of *Advait Vedanta*. Whatever he said was based on his experience. It cannot be classified under the category of any scriptures. Maharshi took keen interest in all the activities of the ashram, including cooking. He would pay full attention to what was cooked in the kitchen; he would first taste each item before it was served. If there was any deficiency, he would mention it. A new visitor once started criticizing the Maharshi in front of Shriram for this habit. When he was criticizing, Maharshi kept smiling; in between he would look at Shriram. By looking at Shriram like this what Maharshi conveyed, only Shriram would have known.

The day Shriram was departing the ashram, Maharshi scolded a volunteer. In fact he had beaten the monkey of the ashram by the stick. Maharshi himself used to feed gram and other eatables to the monkeys. He said – “There was no need to beat the monkey. If the monkey was threatening the children, you should have

also rebuffed it. In future, keep this in mind.” Such a small talk appeared to the volunteer like an admonition. He felt that he had done a great mistake for which he should do atonement. He was about to weep and said – “Bhagvan! I will keep fast as atonement.”

Maharshi took this incident in a lighter vein and said – “There is no need of fast. If you really want to square the account, search that monkey and tell him to beat you with stick.” After saying this Maharshi started laughing. Others also started laughing. Shriram too laughed, but later on he noted down this incident in his diary. He interpreted the virtues of sympathy, repentance, justice, management, wisdom, etc in the light of this incident.

Pondicherry was not very far from Tiruvannamalai. Sri Aurobindo’s ashram had already taken shape there. Elites, philosophers, politicians, etc from India and abroad had started visiting that place. At the time of departure, Ganapati Shastri suggested to him to visit that ashram also. But Shriram told that he would visit that ashram sometime later; the reason for refusal was that he had inner inspiration to visit only Ramana Ashram during that trip.

Curiosity

Curiosity means a desire to know about something. It can be considered as the first essential step in the process of attaining knowledge. The brain of a person having earnest desire to learn something becomes like a magnet which automatically draws to it the knowledge about his/her desired subject. The infinite Universe is crammed with infinite amount of knowledge. However, an individual can receive only as much knowledge from it as the level of his/her curiosity would permit. A person having no desire for learning cannot learn anything. Therefore, it is essential that anyone who wishes to gain knowledge must develop curiosity.

– Acharya Shriram Sharma

The pure mind is itself Brahman; it therefore follows that Brahman is no other than the mind of the sage.

– Ramana Maharshi

No More of These Heinous Acts of Brutality

This beastliness – the enemy of innocence

A Few months ago, a person who incessantly tried to bring back smiles on the lips of young and innocent children was awarded the most prestigious Nobel Prize. Kailash Satyarthi from our own country and Malala Yousafzai of Pakistan were the recipients of this coveted prize. While this is something to feel happy about, there are many other incidents that evoke grief. In the region of Assam, Bodo terrorists killed several school-going children. In a similar incident, terrorists got inside a school in Peshawar (Pakistan) and mercilessly massacred 134 children. What is this terrorism that does not even show compassion towards children? Who are these beasts in the guise of humans?

This question is not directed towards any one person but towards entire humanity in general. Let's listen directly from one of the kids who experienced this horrific incident in Peshawar – "Today, our class was arranged in the hall of the school. Hearing the sound of gunshots, the attention of the children was drawn towards the sounds outside. Before, we could realize what is happening, the sounds seemed to be approaching us. This resulted in chaos. All of us ducked beneath the desks in fear. Almost immediately after that, two armed men kicked the door of the hall and entered. They pulled out my friends from under the desks and began to rain bullets on

them. I got shot on my leg but my friends who got shot in stomach and chest died on the spot. There were more people severely injured than those who died. They would have to spend the rest of their lives with impaired bodies!" Be it India or Pakistan, or for that matter any other country in the world, as long as shadow of terrorism lurks there, this is what the children have to say – "Living continuously in the unwanted fear and playing in the shadow of guns, learning about who is our own and who is an enemy, developing a desire to take revenge, the fear of blood-soaked books and not able to return home from school alive – this is not the world that we want to live in." A parent from Assam has similar sentiments to express – "My child was wearing uniform in the morning and now he is a handful of ashes that has become cold with my tears. My son was my dream. My dream has been killed. My child was afraid of a toy gun, what must he have felt when confronted with a real gun? They killed my son." These words pierce the heart of every person. The terrorist attacks in Assam and Pakistan have engulfed hundreds of homes in darkness. This terrorism has taken the lives of hundreds of children and at the same time left us to ponder on innumerable questions.

Owing to these terrorist attacks, the human mind is forced to ponder if humanity is losing against beastliness. Childhood is something

**What separates us from the animals, what separates us from the chaos,
is our ability to mourn people we've never met.**

- David Levithan

that breaks borders and boundaries. It knows nothing but smiles. The only question haunting the mind of each injured soul of the onlooker is – where will all this destructive mind lead to? And what are these dangers that human beings are themselves creating? These incidents pose grave questions for India and Pakistan. But these are also things that the world, at large, should ponder upon. We should definitely ask ourselves – Is this the kind of world we wanted? A world which is devoid of humane mind and where humanity dies of shame each single day?

In human society and in every religion around the world, children are considered equivalent to God. They are innocent, ignorant and tender. They have got nothing to do with the politics of the nation or religion. The barbaric treatment these children received in India and Pakistan makes entire humanity bend their heads in shame. These incidents that shatter humanism to shreds pose an imminent question – In a world where innocent children are unsafe, who else can feel secure? Different terrorist groups, though think differently, but they all agree on one thing - that they want to create a horrendous world of their own.

Entire world is in the clutches of terrorism

According to global terror index, 1/3rd of the world has been subjected to terrorist violence. Terrorist violence shatters the social, financial and family framework which results in later generations to suffer the consequences. Their fate is sealed even before they are born. Under the shadow of terror, neither the mothers nor

the kids are safe. How will the childhood of a kid be nurtured under such circumstances? What will be the mindset of those children? Those with a logical mind and human heart will not find it difficult to understand the plight of these children. But the irony of the situation is that those who are inflicting pain and terror are also 'humans'.

The reasons for the rapid spread of these hideous jinn of terrorism are communal, religious, regional or racial fanaticism. Be it India or Pakistan, both these countries have faced this situation sometime or the other. The situation is the same today. There need to be concerted efforts to resolutely fight this war against terrorism. We can neither fight the war nor win it by pinning the blame on one another. Under these dire circumstances, it has become necessary for each and every truly humane family to take the responsibility of saving humanity from getting lost. The shadow of terror is lurking everywhere. Schools and childhood are also not outside its clutches.

Children from well-educated families are becoming part of these terrorist organizations. Terror groups are not only targeting youth but also youngsters to poison their minds with hate. They are using online internet methods to brainwash youngsters to join their organizations. Owing to this, their efforts have become global which implies that every family in the world should be alert and cautious. Just a few days ago, an appeal was published in newspapers worldwide – “O daughters, don't leave us behind and join I.S.". That appeal reflected the pain and agony of the parents. That appeal should be publicized so that all of us can share the pain of those parents.

Fighting terrorism is like being a goalkeeper. You can make a hundred brilliant saves but the only shot that people remember is the one that gets past you.

- Paul Wilkinson

In the newspaper article that published the appeal, it was written that three school girls from Britain had left their homes and were leaving for Syria to join the dangerous terrorist organization known as 'Islamic State'. The parents of two of these girls had made a heart-rending appeal imploring them to come back home. Three friends - 17 year old Khadija Sultana, 15 year old Shamima Begum and another 15 year old girl left their homes in East London and got onto a Istanbul flight. Turkey is an important entry port to those who want to go to Syria.

Sultana's family said that they were completely devastated because of her leaving. They told this in a police report that was later published. They said - "We all love you very much. Last few days have been extremely scary for us. We are missing you very much. Your mother is especially worried. Nothing is like before without you." Family of Shamima Begum told that they have tired themselves out crying over what has happened. They said - "Syria is a very dangerous place. We do not want you to go there." Police said that these girls were extremely good at studies and topped their class. Terrorist Prevention experts have said that more than 50 girls have likewise gone to Syria and joined I.S. from Britain.

The UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, made a remark that was published. In that he said - "I wonder what the terrorists say to convince the young and intelligent minds that make them change the direction of their lives and join their movement. There is certainly something in that, which the so-called smart people like us are not able to do. There is

something lacking in us, which we should do but are not doing. According to a report released by America's Institute of Economics and Peace, merely four organizations are responsible for the 80% terrorism. It is surprising to know that no relationship whatsoever has been found between terrorism and poverty or illiteracy. It implies that it is not the inadequacies in life that is pulling people towards terrorism. It is based on misdirecting the minds of young and energetic minds. In this present state of affairs, entire world has to search for an answer to this question - till how long is this pain of sordidness consume the entire world? The citizens and government of each and every country should understand that terrorism can never become a means for achieving national welfare. How will people who are devoid of empathy and humaneness ever understand the difference between what is to be embraced and what is to be rejected?"

How do we ensure a happy and secure future for our children?

Be it India or Pakistan or any other country, for that matter, the problem is not confined to just a few children. Think of how many innocent minds who have witnessed the horror are haunted by fear and darkness throughout their life. When they see the manner in which human life and their values are dwindling like this, how do you think will their own personalities be molded? This is a big question. The social media is full of pictures of terror and the children affected by it. The psychology of a person who spreads terror is such that he does not take pity on either a child or a woman.

The terrible thing about terrorism is that ultimately it destroys those who practice it. Slowly but surely, as they try to extinguish life in others, the light within them dies.

- Terry Waite

According to a recent report from 'Global Terror Index' – India is placed 6th among 162 countries afflicted by terror and violence. 82% of terrorist violence is limited to Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria. The latest report issued by United Nations Human Rights Council on terrorist violence in Iraq and Syria reveals that children and women in these countries are targets of sexual abuse.

The most grievous aspect of all kinds of terror-inducing incidents leaves a permanent blemish on the minds of children. The horrible truth of the present day is that neither the innocence of a young mind nor the modesty of a woman is spared as a result of these acts of violence. In this blood-curdling play, the side that is losing badly is humaneness. All of us should

strive and not let humaneness lose, even at the cost of any number of hardships and sacrifices. When Malala Yousafzai was attacked in the Swat Valley of Pakistan, she received a bullet wound in her head. She then said – "Whichever is the terrorist organization that is involved, all I have to say to them is that they also should send their children to school. This is essential for all children." Similarly, in India, the children afflicted by Bodo terrorists said – "We are not afraid. We want to get back to school. We want to send out a message to the terrorists that we are not afraid and we will get educated. We want school bag and not the gun."

These are the emotions and feelings that will keep humanity and humaneness alive for ages to come.

A municipality officer stopped at the field of suburban house, and talked to the resident farmer. He told the farmer, "I need to inspect your ranch for illegally grown drugs." The farmer said, "Okay, but don't go in that field over there.....", as he pointed out the location.

The municipality officer verbally exploded saying, "Mister, I have the authority of the Government with me!" Reaching into his rear pants pocket, he removed his badge and proudly displayed it to the farmer. "See this badge? This badge means I am allowed to go wherever I wish on any land!! No questions asked or answers given!! Have I made myself clear.....do you understand?" The farmer nodded politely, apologized, and went about his chores.

A short time later, the farmer heard loud screams, looked up, and saw the municipality officer running for his life, being chased by the farmer's BIG BULL. With every step the bull was gaining ground on the officer, and it seemed likely that he'd sure enough get gored before he reached safety. The officer was clearly terrified. The farmer threw down his tools, ran to the fence and yelled at the top of his lungs..... "Your badge, show him your BADGE!!!

Moral:

- 1- Don't show arrogance while using your authority. Use it with logic and common sense.
- 2- Let the other person speak if he wants to say something. It clarifies doubts and confusions.

For me the best way to fight against terrorism - educate the next generation.

- Malala Yousafzai

The Techniques of Prana Therapy -3

[In the previous three articles of this series, we have learnt about two techniques of Prana Therapy; namely, *Marjan* and *Shvasochchhvas*. In the present article, we are discussing two more techniques namely, *Sparsh kriya* (healing strokes by hands) and *Kamp Upachar* (treatment by quivering-hand motion).
– Editor]

Sparsh Kriya (The Healing Strokes)

The exercise of *Sparsh kriya* has a miraculous effect on the patient. Healing by stroking with hands has been known to human race since time immemorial. The famous Egyptologist Alpini Prospero has mentioned about priests of Egypt treating serious diseases by mysterious applications of massages. The well-known ancient Greek physician Hippocrates is reported to have cured patients by massaging. Many famous historical physicians such as Alexandra and Peter Bokel, the court physician of the thirteenth Louis of France, are known to have treated serious diseases by this method.

Now-a-days too, intermittent pressing of limbs with hands, massaging the scalp, rubbing oil on body and massaging soles of feet are commonly used for relieving muscles from tiredness. The common man in this country is aware of the advantage of stroking with hands for relieving pain in stomach and pressing head with both hands, for getting rid of headaches.

Massaging is a process of transmitting therapist's personal Prana energy to the body of the person being treated. Massaging does not require application of much pressure by hands. The pressure should be light and pleasant for the patient and the movement of palms vibratory. For healing massages particularly, the lower part the palm (adjoining wrist) and fingers should be used.

Types of *Sparsh* (Strokes):

(i) By rubbing hands

In this process, palms of both hands are rubbed together to energize them with additional Prana energy. The pressure and friction of the motion increases the energy on the surface of the palms making them warm. This energy is passed on to the diseased organ of the body of the patient by covering the latter with one or both hands. After about three minutes the process is repeated. In this way, after a few applications, a great relief is felt. This method is particularly useful for headaches and pain in eyes.

Prana only is the source of all power. Engrossing in Prana sadhana entails every sadhana practice.

– Yogiraj Sri Shyamacharan Lahiri

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|---|--|
| <p>(ii) By brushing movement of fingers The tips of the fingers are brought together in a straight line by slightly bending the ends of the digits. The fingers are then moved together over the entire length of the diseased part of the organ with slight pressure. If the entire body of the patient is required to be treated, the movement is carried out in two parts. First the fingers are made to brush over from head to abdomen and thereafter, from abdomen to feet. The chest and the abdomen need more attention, since these are the parts where the nutritive elements of body are produced.</p> | <p>(vi) The pinching stroke Pinching excites the flow of energy and increases the circulation of blood locally in the part of organ being pinched. For pinching stroke, thumb and index fingers of both hands are used simultaneously. Holding about half an inch of skin between the thumbs and index fingers pinching is carried out in quick succession all over the diseased part of the organ in a circular movement.</p> |
| <p>(iii) The total stroke It is a type of massage in which the diseased organs are stroked with palms from one end to the other and the process is repeated again and again in the same order. The flow of energy from the therapist to the patient helps in healing.</p> | <p>(vii) The rubbing or grinding stroke Such strokes are required for those organs which have become very weak and degenerated. In this stroke, lower parts of the four fingers (adjoining wrists) are vigorously rubbed on the diseased part of the organ till it becomes sufficiently warm.</p> |
| <p>(iv) The circular stroke Many therapists consider the circular stroke to be useful. In this method hands and fingers are moved on the diseased organs in a circular anticlockwise movement.</p> | <p>(viii) Lateral blows by hands The gesture is like repeatedly hitting by delivering lateral blows by hands (as in martial arts). Keeping the fingers of hands joined together and stretched, the edge of hand is held like a hatchet. Then using the side of the lower part of hand (adjoining the wrist), and the little finger as the chopping edge of a sword or knife, the diseased part of the organ is repeatedly struck at brief intervals by giving it soft blows.</p> |
| <p>(v) The kneading stroke Kneading massage is very useful for relieving cramps in the muscles and nervous system. The affected organs are subjected to a kneading action by application of pressure by the tips of fingers all over the organ successively.</p> | <p>(ix) The slapping stroke Everyone is familiar with the action involved in slapping a person. However, in this stroke the slapping action is mild. While using the slapping stroke, the</p> |

The universal *prana* is thus the *Para-Prakiti* (pure Nature), immanent energy or force which is derived from the infinite Spirit, and which permeates and sustains the universe.

- Paramahansa Yogananda

affected part of the body is softly and pleasurably slapped repeatedly, with the same frequency, for a long period.

- (x) The hollow-hand patting stroke
It is easy to learn hollow hand clapping with a little practice. While clapping in this way, the central parts of the palms do not come in contact. Likewise, this stroke is carried out with only fingers and base of palms. Folding the palm, the diseased part of the body is softly patted in this way with the fingers and base of the palm.

Kamp Upachar

(Treatment by quivering-hand motion)

Induction of Prana energy by quivering-hand-motion over the diseased organ of the patient is an important technique of Prana therapy. A beginner may have some difficulty in executing this method, but after a few days of practice it can be easily utilized with success. In this technique, palms of hands are made to quiver continuously for some time as though these are being vibrated under rhythmic electrical impulses or through some other oscillating instrument (like a tuning fork).

The hand is made to quiver like a slender, flexible stick of cane being given a vigorous jerk or as a gong vibrating on being struck by a wooden hammer. Such vibrations can be created by stiffening muscles of the hand from wrist to elbow and attempting to quiver this part of the hand as a whole. Before taking up treatment, the therapist should learn to quiver hand for some time, with a uniform frequency.

Learning movement of quivering

For learning quivering of hand, keep a glass filled with water on a small table. Placing the hand and palm on the surface of the table beside the glass and make it quiver. It would induce vibrations in the top of the table as well as in the glass and water kept on it. When quivering in the hand takes place in the desired manner, it would create a sort of hollow in the middle of the surface of water in the glass. The quivering is considered practicable for treatment when it can be continued with the same frequency for some time without making the hand tired.

The treatment

While executing the treatment, the part of the body desired to be treated is touched with the vibrating hand and fingers with minimum contact, to permit the quivering without any resistance. The patient would feel as though the bio-electric vibrations are taking place within his/her own body. While an organ of the body is being locally treated in this way, if someone else touches some other part of the body of the patient, it would also appear to vibrate simultaneously.

Such vibrations are administered either by using the palm of one hand and its fingers exclusively or by both hands and fingers simultaneously. Where only a small part of the organ is required to be treated, it would be sufficient to use only one hand for therapy. For the treatment of entire torso or forehead both hands should be used. Normally 2 to 5 frequencies of vibrations are considered sufficient for healing.

**Prana — is the spirit of mantra. Mantra, in turn, is the expression of prana.
Whatever most engages our prana becomes the main subject of our speech.**

— David Frawley

Save yourself from the Ill-effects of Internet

Internet is a gift of the modern age. It has played a crucial role in spreading information and disseminating knowledge. It has played an ambivalent role. It has reduced the distance between people, who could now see and converse with their acquaintances, who are far off. They could also see the maps of different places and nations and could navigate to find different routes. However, internet has increased the rift between individuals. Its overuse is reducing the natural contact that exists between people. Moreover, it is increasing psychological disorders, which is a cause of concern.

It is a well-established fact that internet is increasing mental problems. The reason for this is internet addiction. According to a research, it is found that about 182 million people of the world are suffering from internet addiction. Another research claims that it is giving rise to new forms of mental disorders. Psychologist Dr Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic from University College London, with VisualDNA, analyzed the phone and web habits of 1,000 people. He discovered a new technology related disorder dubbed as NetBrain, in which sufferers show increased levels of narcissism, poor attention span and 'fear of missing out' (FOMO).

The addicts of internet get over-indulged in practices like online gambling, constant use of

social media and excessive use of 'apps'. Their constant online presence keeps them tensed everywhere - whether it is their home or their office. Emotional people are thrice more prone to this ailment. Those who use phones excessively, face a six-times more risk, while those using smart-phones are exposed to a sixteen times greater risk. These factors triple the chances of disturbing the balanced working and life style of such people.

If a person starts neglecting important works for spending time online and begins to feel uncomfortable when not using the net, then he needs to be careful, as he has been addicted to the global network. Such people may even get involved in anti-social activities. While treating such people, the first step is to keep them away from all electronic gadgets for a period of seventy-two hours. Then, they are advised to keep their phones off while eating and to spend more time with their relatives and friends.

Recent researches have showed that excessive use of gadgets adversely affects the brains of children. This is because the wireless gadgets like mobiles, laptops and tablets emit harmful radiations, which could damage the neurons of the brain. This is even more serious because the brain of a child is more sensitive than that of an adult.

The Internet is the first thing that humanity has built that humanity doesn't understand, the largest experiment in anarchy that we have ever had."

- Eric Schmidt

According to a report published in the 'Journal of Microscopy and Ultrastructure', children are more affected by these radiations than adults. This is because their brain, especially its upper portion, is thinner and smaller. For the same reason, gadgets are considered dangerous for the foetus developing in the womb of pregnant women. So, they are advised not to carry gadgets like mobiles in their pockets.

The issue here is not only to keep the children away from the gadgets. Infact, the parents who keep telling their children to refrain from excessive use of mobiles and computers, themselves use these gadgets more than their children. A recent research carried out at the Boston University, USA has revealed that excessive use of electronic gadgets could have a negative bearing on familial relations.

This research work was carried on fifty-five families, in which the conversation between parents and their children was recorded and analysed. The main point of analysis was the nature of relationship that existed between the parents and their children. How do they behave with each other? How much do they care for each other? Do they take their meals together? The research revealed that while eating or conversing with their children, about thirty percent of the parents were busy with their mobiles, while another sixteen percent checked their mobiles repeatedly. The researchers also found that while the parents were busy with their phones, their children were eager to get their attention. They were deliberately committing mistakes so that their parents could leave the phones and give attention to them.

The renowned child psychologist, Sherry Turkle explains that the responsibility of parents does not get completed only by providing their children with various means of material comfort. It is also essential that they make their children feel their love, affection and security. Those parents who fail in this are not able to connect them with the emotional aspect of their children. Moreover, loneliness and the feeling of being neglected impede the mental and personality development of their children.

The fast pace with which the young generation is making use of the technology in this 'Digital Age', makes us to believe that this would revolutionise the education sector. However, there are many people who are apprehensive that the gadgets like smartphones, tablets, e-readers and laptops are adversely affecting the concentration and mental power of the young generation. Though these mediums provide us with abundant information, they also put forward numerous contradictory views on every topic. This creates confusion in mind as to which view should be accepted and subjected to profound contemplation. Further, nowadays people prefer to download information from websites like Google and Wikipedia, rather than memorizing it. This practice adversely affects their memory.

It is true that internet and gadgets are very useful and provide us with numerous comforts. But, their ill-effects are also obvious. Timely efforts are required for mitigating these harmful effects. It is essential that the internet and gadgets must be used within limits, their addiction should be prevented and our life should be saved from their harmful effects.

It is the greatest truth of our age: Information is not knowledge.

- Caleb Carr

How to Lead a Successful & Fulfilling life ?

Time may give us both - honor as well as insult. It rewards those who have a positive thinking and who focus their energy in a specific direction. On the other hand, it neglects those whose thoughts are overshadowed by the darkness of negativity or those who work aimlessly. Man has only two basic endowments - ability to think and caliber to work. He should use these gifts appropriately, comprehensively and timely to make his life successful, glorious and great. But, if he fails to utilize them, he remains incompetent and thus, becomes liable to insult and criticism. One may belong to any walk of life or to any field, but to make accomplishments and earn distinction, he would have to integrate prudence and diligence into his time-bound routine.

Nowadays men and women, both, are getting equal opportunities and hence more and more women are proving their potential in various fields. It will be appreciated if men start supporting and cooperating with their life-mates in their household chores. It is such cooperation that will give real meaning to life. On perceiving the universe from a broader perspective, we would find that it is the continuous cooperation between man and nature, which has maintained its harmony and positivity. Success cannot be attained unless the all-pervasive, eternal truth is perceived around us. Today, the path to success is full of competition. Talent is not the sole guarantee

to success; it also requires a profound understanding of the trinity of time, thoughts and toil.

It has been found that many times a talented person does not get desired success and honor. In fact, he may even be ignored. The main cause behind this is his failure to manage his time, maintain positive thinking and streamline efforts in a desired direction. This fact is not confined merely to one's workplace, but even extends to one's home and the society. One who cannot complete his work within the set time limit is considered irresponsible. The task may either be professional or domestic. If we analyze honestly, we would find that we commonly make two mistakes. In the first place, we do not prioritize different tasks. Secondly, we ignore various aspects of time management.

Most of our time, in office as well as at home, gets wasted in gossip. Many times, a substantial part of the day is lost just in conversing with our colleagues over tea. This occurs because of lack of mental alertness and excess of laziness. Perhaps, this situation could have been avoided had we decided our priorities beforehand. On doing so, we could easily do various tasks according to their priority. This only requires additional alertness and thoughtfulness. Fifteen minutes in the morning are sufficient to set various tasks according to their priority. For instance,

Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.

– Winston S. Churchill

various activities of the day could be grouped as those which should be done in the forenoon and those which should be done in the afternoon. Similarly, if we have to complete a task in ten days, we should allot it a time limit of seven days. This would give us the chance to recheck our work, thus ruling out any possibility of mistake. Moreover, timely completion of the work would add to our credibility.

What is life? It is the time given to us by the Almighty. The real connotation of life could only be explained by making proper use of time. We need to bring some improvement in ourselves in order to learn punctuality. For this, we will have to keep an account of the activities in which we spend our time. For instance, if we spend fifteen minutes in talking to someone on phone, we should question ourselves whether so much time should have been given to that person. In this way, we will be aware of how much time has been invested in useful tasks and how much has been wasted.

Our worklist should also include the unfinished tasks. Specific time limits should be fixed for each activity. The expected date of completing the work should also be written. Time limit should be decided even for such tasks as making phone calls or sending e-mails. In this way, our incomplete tasks will also be completed easily. In order to ensure that all our work gets completed within time, it is essential that we do not load ourselves with excessive work. We should take only that amount of work which can be easily done within the specified time limit. For this, we should also learn the art of saying 'no'. If we are already preoccupied, we should politely say that we are presently busy in some other essential work.

Often, we overload ourselves with excessive work, only to build our image before others. However, this extra work causes tension and we end up questioning our own potential and credibility. Workload destroys our time schedule and we end up in mismanagement. Instead, a courteous refusal can save us from numerous troubles. But, it should be noted that fear of work should not be the reason behind our refusal. Before refusing we should ask ourselves - are we refusing just because we fear from it? A difficult task can also be accomplished easily, provided we have divided it into smaller parts.

We should keep in mind that we need additional information for accomplishing complex tasks. So, we should freely ask for such information from our colleagues and seniors. This would rule out the possibility of any error and also improve our mutual relations. Always set a practically achievable time limit for completing the task. If we feel that the time allotted for the work is less, we should refuse it in the beginning, so that tension may not build up and the quality of work is also not compromised.

If we can incorporate constructive thoughts and focused hard work in our well-planned routine, then the life automatically begins to move on the path of self-restraint. Without discipline and management, not only the routine, but the entire life becomes haphazard. Then, people neither listen to us nor accept what we say. We lose our significance and then no one takes us seriously. On the other hand, if restraint and self-management are strictly followed, then life and the environment of workplace both get filled with positive energies. For this we need to change our

It is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation.

- Herman Melville

mindset. By doing so, we can overcome the fear of any work. Moreover, every challenge only adds to our enthusiasm. If we begin to enjoy challenging tasks, it means that our life has become a source of energy, light and inspiration. However, sometimes it happens that we fail to complete our task successfully and skillfully within the specified time, in spite of our best efforts.

But, we should neither worry nor lose our heart in such circumstances. On the contrary, we should re-analyze the whole situation and become more alert and prepare ourselves for more hard work. Believe that one, who adopts optimism and diligence, can achieve even the impossible. His life becomes a synonym of success, skill and completeness.

The Reflection

There was a king who was a great admirer of art. He encouraged artists from all over his country and gave them valuable gifts. One day an artist came and said to the king, "Oh King! Give me a blank wall in your palace and let me paint a picture on it. It will be more beautiful than anything you have ever seen before." Now, the king happened to be constructing a big hall at the rear end of the palace. So he said, "All right you may work on one of the walls in the new hall." So the artist was given the job. Just then, another young man came forward and said, "Oh King! Please allow me to work on the opposite wall. I too am an artist." The king said, "What would you like to make?" The man said, "My Lord, I shall make exactly what that man will make on the opposite wall. Moreover, I shall do so, without looking at his work. I would even request you to have a thick curtain put up between the two walls so that either of us cannot see the other." Now, that was a tall statement. Everyone in the king's court, including the king and the first artist, were intrigued. But the king loved surprises and he decided to give the young fellow a chance. The following day a thick curtain was put into place and both the artists got to work. The first artist brought in a regular supply of paint, oil, water etc. The second one would come with a cloth and a bucket of water every day.

After a month the first artist told the king that his work was complete and he would like to show it to the king. The king sent for the second artist and asked him, "Young man, when would your work be ready? I am coming to see the first wall this evening." The man said, "My Lord, my wall is ready too!" The king went to see the first artist's wall. He was very, very impressed with the painting and gave a hefty sum as a reward to the artist. He then asked for the curtain to be raised.

Lo and behold! The same painting was to be seen on the opposite wall too! Amazing! But true! Each line, each minor detail was exactly as it was on the first wall. But this man had not been seeing what was going on, on the other side of the curtain. So how had he done it? The king wanted to know the secret. He gave a double reward to the fellow. Then he said, "Young man, I am indeed very happy with your work. But you must tell me; how did you do it?" The lad said simply, "It's very easy! I just polished the wall every day!" It was a wall made of white marble! The fellow polished it till it shone like a mirror. The reflection of the painting across the room, showed up in it!

The moral of the story: The world is a reflection of yourself. If you are sad, jealous, dejected, angry, restless ... that is what the world will seem to be! If you are happy, the world will seem to be a paradise.

If A is a success in life, then A equals x plus y plus z; x is work, y is play and z is keeping your mouth shut.

- Albert Einstein

Program for the Seeker - I

Disciplined Life Makes Mind Relaxed and Free

Dear brothers, now we are gradually approaching the end of the Gita. In the Fifteenth Chapter, we viewed the complete philosophy of life. The Sixteenth Chapter was a sort of annexure to it. In the human mind, and in the society which is its image, a struggle between two types of tendencies, two ways of living or two types of human nature is continually going on. The Sixteenth Chapter teaches us to nurture and develop the divine nature. The Seventeenth Chapter is the second annexure. It can be said to contain *karyakram yoga* (yoga of daily program). In this Chapter, the Gita has suggested a daily routine. This Chapter deals with the program for the seeker.

If we want our mind to feel relaxed and happy, we should have discipline in life. Our daily living should follow a well-thought out design. It is only when life proceeds within particular pre-set bounds in a disciplined way that the mind can be free. A river flows freely, but its flow is bound between the banks. If it were not so bound, the water would scatter in different directions and go waste. Let us keep the example of the *jnani* in our mind. The sun is the preceptor of the *jnani*s. The Lord has said in the Gita that he taught *karmayoga* first to the Sun, and Manu – the thinking man – learnt it from the Sun. The sun is free and independent. The secret of its

freedom lies in its regularity. It is our everyday experience that if we regularly take a particular route, we are able to think while walking, without paying any attention to the road. But if we walk on different roads every day, our attention would be focused on the road and our mind would not be free to think. Thus, discipline in life is a must to have a free and happy life.

In this context, the Lord has suggested a program in this Chapter. We are born with three institutions or orders. The Gita is suggesting here a program whereby they can operate in an efficient manner to make life happy. The first of these is the body that wraps us. The vast world, the whole creation around us, of which we are a part, is the second one. The third one is the society into which we are born. It includes our parents, brothers and sisters and neighbors. Every day we use these three and wear them out. The Gita wants us to endeavor continually to replenish what is lost through us, and thereby make our life fruitful. We should selflessly discharge our inborn duties towards these three orders.

These duties are to be discharged. But how? *Yajna* (sacrifice), *dana* (charity) and *tapas* (penance and austerities), these three together comprise the scheme for the purpose. We are familiar with these terms, but we do

Delusion arises from anger. The mind is bewildered by delusion. Reasoning is destroyed when the mind is bewildered. One falls down when reasoning is destroyed.

– The Gita

not comprehend them clearly. If we could comprehend them and bring them into our lives, the body, the creation and the society, all would fulfill their purpose and our lives will also be free and happy.

Triple Endeavour for This Purpose

Let us first see what *yajna* means. Every day we make use of nature. If a hundred of us crowd together in one spot for a day, that will spoil the place, pollute the atmosphere, and thus harm nature. We should do something to recoup nature, to restore its balance. It is for this purpose that the institution of *yajna* was created. *Yajna* is intended to reimburse, to put back what we have taken from nature. We have been farming for thousands of years and eroding the fertility of the soil thereby. *Yajna* says, "Return to the soil its fertility. Plough it. Let it absorb heat from the sun. Manure it." To make good the loss is one of the purposes of the *yajna*. Another purpose is to purify the things we use. We use a well and make the place all round it dirty and slushy. The harm thus

caused should be undone; so we should clean the surroundings. Production of something new is also an aspect of *yajna*. We wear clothes; so we should spin regularly to produce them. Growing cotton or food grains, spinning—all these are forms of *yajna*. Whatever we do as *yajna* should not have any selfish motive behind it; it should rather be done with a sense of duty to compensate the loss we have caused. There is no altruism in it; it is the repayment of what we already owe. In fact, we are born with a debt. What we produce for repayment of that debt is a form of service; we are not obliging anybody thereby. We use so many things in the world around us. *Yajna* should be done for their replenishment and purification as well as for new production.

Human society is the second institution. Our parents, teachers, friends—all of them toil for us. *Dana* has been prescribed to discharge our debt to society. *Dana* too is no altruism. We are already highly obliged to society. We were totally defenseless and weak when we were born. It is the society that looked after us and

Once upon a time a very strong woodcutter asked for a job with a timber merchant, and he got it. His boss gave him an axe and showed him the area where he was supposed to work. The first day, the woodcutter brought 18 trees. "Congratulations," the boss said. "Go on that way!" Very motivated by the boss' words, the woodcutter tried harder the next day, but he only could bring 15 trees. The third day he try even harder, but he only could bring 10 trees. Day after day he was bringing less and less trees. "I must be losing my strength", the woodcutter thought. He went to the boss and apologized, saying that he could not understand what was going on.

"When was the last time you sharpened your axe?" the boss asked. "Sharpen? I had no time to sharpen my axe. I had been very busy trying to cut trees."

Moral of the story: If we don't take time to sharpen the axe, we will become dull and lose our effectiveness. So be alert. Think about the ways by which you can improve your skills and do your job more effectively.

The mind acts like an enemy for those who do not control it.

– The Gita

brought us up. We should therefore serve it. When we serve others without taking anything in return, that is altruism; but we have already taken much from society. The service that is rendered to repay that debt is *dana*. *Dana* means contributing to the progress of mankind. While *yajna* means working for the replenishment of nature's loss, repayment of the debt to society through exerting oneself physically or through money or some other means is *dana*.

The third institution is the body. It too gets worn out daily by our use. We daily use mind, intellect and organs. *Tapas* has been prescribed for removing the defects and distortions that arise in the body and purifying it.

Thus it is our duty to act in such a way that these three institutions—nature, society and the body—function smoothly and efficiently. We create a number of good or bad institutions, but these three have not been created by us. They have already been given to us. They are natural, not man-made. It is our natural duty to replenish through *yajna*, *dana* and *tapas* the wear and tear in these three orders. If we follow this, all our energy will be harnessed for this purpose. No strength will be left for anything else. All our strength would be consumed for the sake of these three institutions. If we could say like Kabir, "O Lord! I am returning this shawl given by you without soiling it!" [1], that would be a matter of fulfillment for us. But for this, the triple program of *yajna-dana-tapas* must be followed.

Here we have regarded *yajna*, *dana* and *tapas* as if they were different entities;

but in fact, they are not really different. Nature, society and the body are not completely distinct entities. Society is not something outside nature, nor is the body outside it. Therefore, productive labour (*yajna*), *dana*, *tapas*—all these can be called *yajna* in a broad sense. It is in this spirit that the Gita has referred to *dravya yajna* (sacrifice with material gifts) and *tapoyajna* (sacrifice with austerities) in the Fourth Chapter. The Gita has broadened the meaning of *yajna*.

Whatever service we render to these three institutions is bound to be a form of *yajna*. But it is also necessary that this service should be without any desire or expectation for reward. In fact, there can be no room whatsoever for expecting any fruit of our actions, as we have already received much from these institutions. We are already burdened with debt. What we have to do is to return what we have already taken. Nature attains a state of harmony and equilibrium through *yajna*, society attains such a state through *dana*, and *tapas* maintains equilibrium in the body. *Yajna-dana-tapas* is thus the triple program for preserving balance and order in these three institutions. It will lead to purification and elimination of pollution.

To enable us to serve in this manner, we have to consume something. That too is a part of *yajna*. The Gita calls it *aahaara* (food). Just as an engine needs fuel, body needs food. The food is not *yajna* in itself, but it is necessary for the successful performance of *yajna*. That is why we say before starting the meals, '*Udarbharan nohe janiye yajnakarma*' ('This is not for filling the belly; it is an act of *yajna*.')

Perform your obligatory duty, because action is indeed better than inaction.

— *The Gita*

Just as offering flowers to the Lord is worship, toiling in the garden to produce the flowers is also worship. Anything done for the performance of *yajna* is a form of worship. The body can be useful to us only when it is given food. Whatever is done for the sake of *yajna* is a kind of *yajna* itself. The Gita calls such actions 'sacrificial acts' (actions for the sake of *yajna*). Whatever is offered to the body to enable it to be ever-ready for service is a kind of sacrificial offering; it is a form of *yajna*. The food taken for the sake of service is indeed sacred.

Again, all these things should have faith at their foundation. One should always have in mind the idea that all service is to be ultimately dedicated to God. This is extremely important. Life cannot be full of service if such

a spirit is not there. Dedication to the Lord is the key that must never be overlooked.

[To be continued]

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References:

- [1] Here, reference is to the famous poem of saint Kabir wherein he tells the Lord that the shawl (i.e. the body) given by the Lord is normally soiled by people, but he has used it with meticulous care and is returning it to Him (while bidding farewell to the world) in the same spotless (i.e. sinless) condition.

There is an old story about a fellow who lived alone and went to a pet store to buy a parrot. He thought the bird might fill some of his lonely hours. The very next day, however, he came back to complain, "That bird doesn't talk."

The store owner asked if he had a mirror in its cage, and the man said he didn't. "Oh, parrots love mirrors," he explained. "When he sees his reflection in the mirror, he'll just start talking away." So he sold him a birdcage mirror.

The bird owner was back the next day to gripe that his parrot still hadn't said a word. "That's very peculiar," allowed the pet expert. "How about a swing? Birds really love these little swings, and a happy parrot is a talkative parrot." So the man bought a swing, took it home, and installed it in the cage. But he was back the next day with the same story. "Does he have a ladder to climb?" the salesman asked. "That just has to be the problem. Once he has a ladder, he'll probably talk your ear off!" So the fellow bought a ladder.

The man was back at the pet store when it opened the next day. From the look on his face, the owner knew something was wrong. "Didn't your parrot like the ladder?" he asked. His repeat customer looked up and said, "The parrot died."

"I'm so sorry," the stunned businessman said. "Did he ever say anything?"

"Well, yes. He finally talked just before he died. In a weak little voice, he asked me, "Don't they sell any bird seed at that pet store?""

Moral of the story: There is a spiritual hunger in the human heart that can't be satisfied by seeing one's own image reflected back in vanity mirrors, playing with our grown-up toys, or climbing the corporate ladder. Our hearts need real nourishment - the love of family and friends, relationships over the pursuit of more things, personal integrity, and a secure connection to God.

Sever the ignorant doubt in your heart with the sword of self-knowledge. Observe your discipline. Arise.

– The Gita

Our Society is grappling with Mental Ailments

We are faced with a big challenge today in the form of increasing mental ailments in people and an urgent solution for these needs to be found. More than 450 million people worldwide are suffering from mental ailments. India is the second largest country in terms of population. A significant portion of our country's human resource suffers from mental ailments, and is unable to make any contribution to development of our country. According to National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences, Bangalore, the number of people in India who suffer from serious mental ailments exceeds 20 million. In addition, there are about 50 million people more who suffer from mental ailments that are not so serious now, but can turn grave in future. These are just the known figures from mental hospitals. Apart from these, there is also a large number of people who need to be admitted to hospitals for a proper treatment. Statistics indicate that there are more than 35 million mentally affected people who need immediate medical attention and emotional support.

In a research conducted by Ranchi Institute of Neuropsychiatry and Applied Sciences it has been found that among the people who seek medical assistance for mental diseases, 30% are youth. Limitless desires that the new generation has cultivated first create stress among youth, then depression and finally lead

them to grave mental ailments. Young people fall prey to various bad habits and their stressful, irregular life styles also cause a number of mental diseases.

These growing instances of mental problems need to be attended to very seriously because they cast a significant influence on the entire social, economic and family setup. Such large numbers of mentally ill people is a big challenge faced by our country. There is a need to adopt proper means and simple ways to treat mentally ill people.

Women, who make up to be half the population of our country, most of the time keep battling within themselves with changes in their physical body and with family and social problems. This leads not only to physical diseases, but their mental health also begins to deteriorate. It is not surprising that amongst mentally ill people, the ratio of women is two times more than men. Ironically, whether women are working or are housewives, mental stress and depression is quickly growing roots and this is badly affecting social and family structure. After all, women form the back bone of families and society.

According to a 2012 report a very large population of women in India is suffering from mental ailments. According to United Nations Organization, every one woman out of five

A desire to be in charge of our own lives, a need for control, is born in each of us. It is essential to our mental health, and our success, that we take control.

- Robert Foster Bennett

and every one man out of twelve is suffering from some kind of a mental ailment. This shows that a huge population in our country is grappling with mental disorders, many with very serious disorders, and are yet deprived of proper medical care. It is difficult to even estimate how many of us are affected by less serious mental diseases.

We do not treat our mentally sick people in a proper manner. Acceptability in our society of mentally sick people for matters related to education, employment, marriage etc. is very low. Additionally they suffer discrimination against them at every stage. A large number of people in our country also get ensnared in blind faith propagated by quacks when a family member falls mentally ill. This causes physical and mental torture to mentally ill patients and the family suffers economic exploitation as well.

Incidents where property and land that belong to mentally ill people is grabbed by relatives and they are expelled from their houses are

very common. Families with narrow minded, immature attitude often expel mentally ill people from home and then, because these people cannot get any employment outside they fall prey to various addictions. It is indeed ironical that mentally affected people do not receive empathy and support from their own families.

According to WHO, by 2020 depression would become the second most common mental disease and in that state not only developing countries but also the developed nations will not be able to properly attend to such a large number of mentally ill people. According to statistics collected by WHO there is a big shortfall in available resources to prevent and cure the problems related to mental health. As a result mental problems are a big cause of concern not only for India but at global scale as well.

What is required is to pay heed to the footsteps of this vicious problem and to take pre-emptive steps to reduce the pain it inflicts.

One day a farmer, walking down the street in a small town came across a large stone in the middle of his path. The farmer complained: "Who could be so careless as to leave such a big stone on the road? Why does someone not remove it?" He went away complaining. The next day, the same thing happened with a milkman. He too went away grumbling but left the stone as it was. Then one day, a young man came across the stone. Worried that someone may fall over it and hurt himself, he decided to push it aside. He pushed long and hard all by himself and eventually managed to remove the stone from the path. He came back and noticed a piece of paper where the stone was kept. He picked the paper and opened it. Inside was written, "You are the true wealth of this nation."

There are two kinds of people: Talkers and doers.
Talkers merely talk, while doers do.

One small crack does not mean that you are broken; it means that you we're put to the test and you didn't fall apart.

— Linda Poindexter

Mental diseases are neither communicable diseases, nor are they caused by changes in seasons. The main cause for these diseases is emotional imbalance that occurs when emotions are suppressed and trampled upon which in time take a serious turn. When negative emotions are constantly fuelled then their distorted form eventually emerges in one form of mental disease or the other.

If we wish to find a complete cure for these diseases, we have to first create sufficient awareness about them. Families have to pay attention towards mental health of their members. Certain standards will have to be set which every family must adopt and accordingly provide for its members. If families take responsibility, then mental

diseases can be treated and thus a big problem faced by our country can be solved.

If we want to completely get rid of all the mental ailments from our society, country and the whole world then the start has to be from the same plan that has been proposed by Gurudev Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya. Emotional restructuring at individual level, instilling of good qualities in family members and developing cooperation and understanding between different sections of the society can create an environment where no person will suffer from emotional repression. Cleansing and refining of thoughts and emotions is the only comprehensive solution based upon which the dreams of a refined mind and a perfect society can come true.

Do you have any of these mental power damaging habits?

1. **No Breakfast:** People who do not take breakfast are going to have a lower blood sugar level. This leads to an insufficient supply of nutrients to the brain causing brain degeneration.
2. **Overeating:** It causes hardening of the brain arteries, leading to a decrease in mental power.
3. **Smoking:** It may cause brain shrinkage that may lead to Alzheimer disease.
4. **High Sugar consumption:** Too much sugar will interrupt the absorption of proteins and nutrients causing malnutrition and may interfere with brain development.
5. **Air Pollution:** The brain is the largest oxygen consumer in our body. Inhaling polluted air decreases the supply of oxygen to the brain, bringing about a decrease in mental efficiency.
6. **Sleep Deprivation:** Sleep allows our brain to rest. Long term deprivation from sleep will accelerate the death of brain cells.
7. **Head covered while sleeping:** Sleeping with the head covered increases the concentration of carbon dioxide and decrease concentration of oxygen that may lead to mental power damaging effects.
8. **Working your brain during illness:** Working hard or studying with sickness may lead to a decrease in efficiency of the brain.
9. **Lacking in stimulating thoughts:** Thinking is the best way to improve our mind power. Lack in brain stimulation thoughts may cause brain shrinkage.
10. **Talking rarely:** Intellectual conversations will promote the efficiency of the brain.

The mind is not a vessel to be filled but a fire to be ignited.

– Plutarch

Our Closest Enemy Laziness

Laziness is one of the common disorders of lifestyle. Many people do not enthusiastically take up their activities in a timely manner due to laziness. They cannot wake up early in the morning due to lethargy and laziness. In the greed to enjoy sleep a little more and then a little more, they end up squandering precious morning hours. Due to a disorganized life style they do not accomplish their tasks with alacrity during day time as well, and whatever they do lacks appeal and appears shabby. Due to laziness people do not achieve much during their work hours as their time gets wasted in worthless activities. We must get rid of laziness. Let us analyse the factors that can reform our lifestyle and style of working to remove laziness from our lives:

Search for motivator – The main reason for laziness in mind and body is lack of motivation and inspiration. Till we awaken eagerness to do something, enthusiasm does not grow within us. So to become active and healthy it is necessary to search for a motivator which can constantly stimulate us to do some good work. Whether the task is minor or major, it cannot be accomplished without a proper motivation.

An important motivator can be to set an ideal but achievable goal. The goal should never escape from our mind and that it continuously urges us to move upwards. Once we select a

goal, we need to make a list of all the important steps that need to be taken to accomplish it. Then we must set out to work on these. However, sometimes in the pursuit of completing tasks the ultimate goal gets forgotten. This should be avoided because if the goal is forgotten, laziness may return due to lack of motivation.

An example of this can be seen in students' lives. Until the examinations are near, students do not take their studies with adequate seriousness due to laziness. But as the examinations draw nearer they become sincere. They drop whatever else they like to do and focus only on studies. On the eve of the examination they are at the highest level of alertness and sometimes cannot even sleep at night due to stress.

This proves that if the goal is clear and within sight, keenness rises to the highest level. On the other hand, if the goal is unclear and far, the enthusiasm to complete tasks remains low. It is also seen that students who prepare for their examinations throughout the year and regularly put in hard work, complete their studies in a much better manner with focused application of mind. On the other hand, the quality of learning of the students who study hard only before the examinations is not of high standard and so they normally do not perform so well in the examinations. This is

There is no foe more dangerous and nearer than laziness.

- Acharya Shriram Sharma

why while performing all our tasks, it is necessary to always keep in mind the goal that we wish to achieve.

One task at a time – Most of the people have a habit of taking up several tasks at a time and in this attempt cannot accomplish any one of them properly. It is necessary that we take up only one task at a time, focus our faculties and attain our goal. Often, to accomplish a bigger task, a number of several smaller subtasks also need to be finished. In such a situation, rather taking up all the subtasks at a time there is a need to decide which are more important than the others. If such a prioritization is not done, mind gets confused and this leads to anxiety and indecision. It is important to define a logical sequence for the subtasks and then sequentially work on them and finish them.

Search for positive examples – To increase enthusiasm and swiftness at work we must keep before us examples of great people who in the past have attained success after struggle and after putting in a lot of hard work. It is important to study their life styles, understand their way of working and adopt their good qualities. In our own social circles we can find several people who inspire us and motivate us to become like them. We must keep such motivating examples in our mind all the time as this will increase our work capacity.

Deploy power of imagination – All of us know that by a proper utilization of the power of imagination, success can be easily attained. For this we need to first visualize ourselves working on the task that we want to finish, then we must visualize about our way of

working, its effects and its outcomes. If the power of visualization is strong and thinking is mature then a person can turn his visualizations into a real workable plan and these work plans can then be converted into success. Being imaginative does not mean we can be lazy and simply get lost in the virtual world of colourful dreams. We must infuse the power of our imagination into meaningful thoughts, utilize it to make proper plans and work on these plans to attain success.

Importance of physical exercise – We must never sideline the importance of physical labour. Initially it may be difficult to overcome laziness and a regular daily physical exercise may seem like a challenge, but even then simple and less laborious exercises can provide sufficient energy in the body. For example – a morning walk in fresh air, micro-exercises, pranayam etc. are some methods that can be initially taken up and these can later inspire us to perform more rigorous physical exercises regularly.

Laziness keeps entering into our lives time and again in different forms through different pretences and prevents us from finishing our tasks. Maharshi Patanjali has rated laziness as the number one obstruction in completing spiritual endeavours. Not only normal human beings, but great people also need to continuously fight against the onset of laziness. While all the methods listed above are helpful, the most important factor is the firm determination and resolve that we shall keep every form of lethargy away from our body and mind at all times. Only then is it possible to successfully get rid of laziness in the long term.

Inspiration is a guest that does not willingly visit the lazy.

- Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Grooming of Vigorous, Radiant, and Virtuous Personalities - 2

(Translation of a discourse given by Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya in 1978 on the topic
"Ojaswī, Tejaswī, evaṁ Manaswī Vyaktitvon kā Nirmāṇa" - continued from the previous issue)

Friends,

A *tapaswī* is like a lighthouse that stands alone in the middle of the ocean, round-the-clock to guide the sailors in the right directions. Be there heavy rains, freezing winter or scorching summer, its light always remains bright. A *tapaswī* not only sacrifices self-interests, self-comforts, but also courageously faces difficulties for selfless service of the society. He is strong from within, he bears pains, tolerates many adversities and ups and downs, but his determination remains firm. A *tapaswī* has to live the life of a true Brahmin. Please note, one does not become a true Brahmin by creed or caste; it is by one's character and deeds that one can become a Brahmin. As the meaning of the word suggests, a Brahmin is the one who lives a life dedicated to the *Brahm*, for the welfare of all beings. He lives an austere life, and like a saint, cares for everyone.

A *tapaswī* has to be a *manaswī* — who has complete control over the mind, and whose heart is like a saint. Butter melts with the heat of the sun. A *tapaswī's* heart melts with compassion looking at the sufferings or agonies of others. Saint's compassion need not bring ordinary tears in his eyes, but it pinches and melts his heart from within, and triggers his willpower. He resolves, stands up against all odds, and dedicates his life to

eliminate this agony and suffering. Lord Ram was a *tapaswī*; during his stay in the forest when he saw the bones of some hermits who were killed by the demons, his heart cried. He pledged to destroy all demons from the earth and he indeed succeeded in doing so. The 'tears' of the cry of such a *tapaswī* are like flames of fire which burn all evils.

In spite of evils, the good continues to exist in the world because of the presence of *tapaswis*. If you look around with fair outlook, you will find many *tapaswis* around you: Clouds carry the 'burden of vapors' collected from the sea, and distribute themselves; sacrifice even their existence to shower the earth and all living beings here with the life-source of water. In this sense they are like *tapaswis*. The earth is also a *tapaswī*, it bears our burden, it pierces its body to produce food-grains, vegetables, and so many other sources of our survival. This way, the trees, the rivers, are also *tapaswis*. If you have the sight of a *tapaswī*, you will also find *tapaswis* in your family. Your mother is a great *tapaswī* who willingly gives parts of her vital elements for production and nourishment of your body, she bears the pains of your birth, allows conversion of her blood into milk for you, and what not. Your wife is also a *tapaswī*, who does so much for you. She leaves her home, her family and adjusts in your family; she offers her love and support to you on all fronts of your life; shares your sorrows, many

Effective and meaningful teaching is that which is given not by speech but by example.

— Acharya Shriram Sharma

times she sacrifices her interests and her priorities to make your life happy; every day she offers service in so many ways, which you almost take for granted.

A true *tapaswī* feels gratitude for everyone who has ever offered him any help in any form. He regards altruistic service of the society as his foremost religion and dedicates his labor and talents for it. His vision and endeavors help uplift the lives of many others and contribute to social development in a positive way.

While the first phase of training at Brahmavarchas centre will focus mainly at cleansing, control, and enlightenment of thoughts, the complementary phase will aim at overall purification and refinement of personality by *tapa*. Observance of fasting, silence and other ascetic disciplines will be part of this training. One who does not live an austere life cannot save his resources for

selfless service. One who does not have self-control cannot put in best of his efforts.

As I had mentioned earlier, cleansing of the intrinsic impressions and experiences assimilated in the (unconscious) mind for unaccountably many past lives is essential for becoming a *manaswī* and *tapaswī*. *Upāsana*¹ and *Gayatri-anuṣṭhāna sādhanā*² lend great support in this purification process. These spiritual practices will be integral parts of the training at Brahmavarchas.

Unless one is a *manaswī* and *tapaswī* he cannot sustain his motivation and endeavor for a good cause. *Tapa* and *sādhanā* raise the *prāṇa*³ and thus generate vigor and radiance in the personality of the *manaswī-tapaswī*. A true *manaswī* and *tapaswī* has such a strong willpower and vigor that his endeavors always excel and expand. The radiance of his personality and warmth of his selfless service is such that it attracts and motivates many

There is a legend of a man who was lost in the desert, dying of thirst. He stumbled on until he came to an abandoned house. Outside the dilapidated, windowless, weather-beaten, deserted shack was a pump. He stumbled forward and began pumping furiously, but no water came from the well. Then he noticed a small jug with a cork at the top and a note written on the side: "You have to prime the pump with water, my friend. P.S. And fill the jug again before you leave." He pulled out a cork and saw that the jug was full of water.

Should he pour it down the rusty pump on the flimsy instruction written on the outside of the jug? What if it didn't work? All of the water would be gone. If he drank the water from the jug, he could be sure he would not die of thirst. But something from inside told him to follow the advice and choose the risky decision. He proceeded to pour the whole jug of water down the rusty old pump and furiously pumped up and down. Sure enough, the water gushed out! He had all he needed to drink. He filled the jug again, corked it and added his own words beneath the instructions on the jug: "Believe me, it really works. You have to give it all away before you can get anything back." That's why Giving is important..!!!

The birth as a human being is easy but it requires a great effort to be humane.

- Acharya Shriram Sharma

others. It is these kinds of wise, vigorous and radiant personalities dedicated for our benevolent cause that I want to develop at Brahmavarchas.

On several occasions, I have stated that our mission (of *Yuga Nirmāṇa*⁴) is based on refined transformation and reconstruction at the level of individuals, families and society – namely, *Vyakti Nirmāṇa*, *Pariwāra Nirmāṇa* and *Samāja Nirmāṇa*. The training at *Brahmavarchas* will initiate *Vyakti Nirmāṇa*, which means awakening the *Satyam* (truthfulness), *Shivam* (sagacity, virtuousness) and *Sundaram* (auspiciousness, inner beauty, and benevolence) dwelling in the inner self of humankind.

The vigorous, radiating and virtuous personalities groomed here will disseminate the righteous thoughts and initiate the process of *Vyakti Nirmāṇa* in different parts of the world. Devout training and guidance of more and more of such deserving volunteers will continue at this centre. Expansion of this light will embrace the masses and thus also prepare the grounds for *Pariwāra Nirmāṇa* and *Samāja Nirmāṇa*. It may appear a minuscule effort today, but it is like planting a sapling that will grow into a mighty tree. It is the foundation of a unique spiritual revolution that will awaken and elevate the good that exists within everybody. Gradually, it will also churn and raise collective consciousness.

I have invited you all to join hands in this great endeavor. This is a mission inspired by the Almighty. Irrespective of who participates in it, it is going to be accomplished. Dedicated participation in it will be like being an associate of God. You may become His ‘partner’, His ‘shareholder’, if you wish so, by whole-

hearted contribution of some fraction of your time, talent, and other potentials and resources, and by your participation in this mission’s activities. If you determine and honestly attempt to rise worth human dignity, you must come here. The demons of egotism, selfishness, and avarice sitting in your mind that keep dragging you in the mire of vices, weaknesses and sufferings will be thrown away by the power of *manaswitā*. Devout *tapasyā* will kindle the light of compassion, generosity, and virtuous faith hidden in your heart (emotional core). This will be the beginning of your divine evolution.

Sādhana of Pragyā:

The second establishment that will be inaugurated here soon is the temple of the Divine Mother, Goddess Gayatri. Gayatri is the goddess of *Pragyā* (pure wisdom). The faculty of intellect is with all of us, but some of us let it stagnate and rust without making its constructive use and without bothering to sharpen and augment it; many of us the so-called intelligent beings, including the highly qualified degree-holders and learned ones, use it only as a tool of reading, memorizing, witty debating, etc. As you might have seen, many so-called successful people in the world are clever in making short-cut quick gains, in making fools of others, cheating everyone and still projecting themselves as good. But this is contrary to *Pragyā*.

A wise farmer knows that there is no short-cut to harvesting the yields. He ploughs and irrigates the soil, plants the seed, carefully guards and nurtures the saplings, patiently waits for the crop to grow and harvests it only at the right time. Similar kind of constructive

The identity of a civilized man is his modesty: hard on the self and soft on others.

- Acharya Shriram Sharma

diligence and patience, and justice coupled with sound reasoning and understanding are the characteristic behavioral signs of *Pragyā*. It is reflected in farsightedness and thoughtful prudence. Brilliance, quick grasping of some subject or text of knowledge and sharpness of memory need not be *Pragyā*. Without *pragyā*, bright intellectual talents may be misused in grabbing quick success, making huge profits, masterminding frauds, or other criminal or terrorist activities. This misuse of intellect harms many others and eventually meets devastating ends. Awakening and expansion of wisdom on the contrary enlightens every facet of life and fills it with unalloyed joy.

Devout *upāsanā-sādhana* of Gayatri awakens *pragyā* and *śraddhā*. *Pragyā* means pure wisdom. *Śraddhā* means intrinsic faith and devotion towards ideals and virtues. The idols/pictures of Gayatri symbolize the meanings and principles of *pragyā* and *śraddhā*. For example, Gayatri is shown as riding on the *Rajhans* (a celestial kind of white swan). As per scriptural descriptions, *Rajhans* chooses pearls and leaves other things from the mix kept before it. It thus represents discerning intellect that can discriminate between good and bad, right and wrong and always opts for the good, the righteous. The idol is in the form of a beautiful serene woman with a divine expression of motherly compassion and affection on her face. This teaches us to respect women, and to adopt the intrinsic characteristic of womanhood/motherhood – sensitivity and self-less love. The ornaments and other symbols on the idol also imply and teach the devotee the importance of courage, patience, integrity, pure knowledge, etc.

Many of you have blind faith or superstitious convictions of different forms of gods and goddesses and methods of worships. Get rid of all this. Please note, the idols or pictures of the Supreme Divinity are only symbolic; the rituals, etc are meant only to help conditioning and focusing of the mind. Devotional practices should be used as means to experience the divinity within and around you. As Her devotee, you must understand that Gayatri represents eternal origin of divinity; the infinite power and expansion of divinity.

As part of your *upāsanā-sādhana* of Gayatri, you also meditate upon rising Sun and do mental chanting of the Gayatri Mantra. Rising Sun as the source of light and heat symbolizes the light of wisdom and source of vital energy. *Japa* (rhythmic mental chanting at a consistent pace) of Gayatri Mantra generates spiritual energy. It may take you time to reach that level of deep meditation and *japa*. As part of teaching at Brahmavarchas the deep philosophy and science of Gayatri Mantra will be explained in detail and you will also get an opportunity and ambience to practice meditation and *japa*.

At present, at the time of inauguration of the Pragya Mandir (Gayatri Temple) you must understand the purpose and meaning of the worship of Gayatri. As part of your devotional practice, you must learn and adopt the teachings conveyed by the form of the idol, by the rituals of its worship and most importantly by the meaning of Gayatri Mantra. It's a universal prayer for uprooting the evil, vicious, sinful tendencies, and for inculcation and augmentation of the righteous thoughts and virtues. In simple words, devotion of

Man is not the slave of circumstances. He is the creator, controller and master of them.

- Acharya Shriram Sharma

Gayatri means adoption and dissemination of noble qualities, thoughts and feelings. I have written hundreds of books for this purpose. You must read and also distribute them widely. Good thoughts and goodwill are the master keys to mass-awakening and uplifting.

In the ancient times, when there were no facilities of publication, the hermits used to traverse long distances on foot and teach and preach the masses whom they met on the way. Common people used to go on pilgrimage to the places where some sagacious saints were doing *tapa-sāadhanā*; they used to gain righteous guidance and beatifying peace there. Now, easier modes of spreading and receiving knowledge are available. You must make use of these in a constructive way.

For reaching out in the villages, we have also arranged for *Gyāna Ratha* (mobile library); as part your pilgrimage for Gayatri; you must use these; apart from teaching the illiterates, you may also generate mass-awakening in the villages via discourses and audio-video presentations prepared here (at Shantikunj). I have dedicated my life to the devotion of Gayatri – for spreading the light of *Pragyā*. I work for it almost 16 to 17 hours every day. I urge you to spend at least 2 to 4 hours a day for the purpose of self-study and dissemination of the *Pragyā Sāhitya*, good thoughts, and good tendencies. Regard this as an integral part of your devotion and social service. You should also organize meetings and awareness campaigns at town/zonal level to launch collective programmes for this purpose.

Shantikunj – Model of Ideal Society:

We are also going to inaugurate “Gayatri Nagar” here (at Shantikunj, Haridwar). This is a residential colony for the families of our *karyakartas* who have voluntarily dedicated their lifetime for the mission’s work. The families here are examples of our *Pariwāra Nirmāṇa* campaign of reconstruction of the family institution; these are living models of how simple living could be joyous and peaceful; how an ambience of mutual respect, love and shared responsibility among the family members can support progress of every member of the family. Our mission has given key importance to women education and women empowerment, and has emphasized their foundational role in shaping the future of the society. The role of women as mothers in cultivating values and strength of character in the children is also notable in these families.

Gayatri Nagar is a model of a large family-like society. Our organization, as its name “Gayatri Pariwar” suggests, is like a large family. Apart from learning through our courses and training programmes on social-reformation, you can get practical guidance for our campaign of *Samāja Nirmāṇa* – building a happy and progressive society with collective efforts and incorporation of humane-values. I invite you to visit the Gayatri Nagar, interact with the families here. Learn, how, in spite of a busy schedule, they get time to do *upāsana* everyday; how with bearing family responsibilities one can also progress in the spiritual endeavor of *Anuṣṭhāna-Sāadhanā*, etc. Everyone here also participates in collective prayers with chants of Gayatri Mantra and *yagya* (fire-ritual) every day. This is essential

An honest person is like a sparkling diamond among thousand beads.

- Acharya Shriram Sharma

not only for creation of positive sublime environment and for good health, but also for nurturing *śraddhā* in the children.

The three establishments I have introduced today are milestones of the goal of our mission. These mark a great step towards global enlightenment and welfare. We all should join these and contribute to generate immense spiritual energy, which is essential to achieve this epochal goal.

Notes:

1. *Upāsanā*: Devout worship or devotional practice to enable the devotee recall and experience God's presence within and around him. The word meaning of

"*upāsanā*" is 'to sit near'. In simple terms, it is a devotional practice of sitting near God, i.e., having an emotional proximity with divinity that induces awakening of the divine qualities hidden in the devotee.

2. *Sāadhanā*: Spiritual experiment of self-transcendence that begins with ascetic endeavor of self-discipline, self-analysis, and self-refinement.
3. *Prāṇa*: Vital spiritual energy.
4. *Yuga Nirmāṇa*: Creation of a new era of peace, happiness and holistic progress.

|| Om Shanti ||

About a hundred years ago, a man looked at the morning newspaper and to his surprise and horror, read his name in the obituary column. The newspapers had reported the death of the wrong person by mistake. His first response was shock. Am I here or there? When he regained his composure, his second thought was to find out what people had said about him. The obituary read, "Dynamite King Dies." And also "He was the merchant of death." This man was the inventor of dynamite and when he read the words "merchant of death," he asked himself a question, "Is this how I am going to be remembered?" He got in touch with his feelings and decided that this was not the way he wanted to be remembered. From that day on, he started working toward peace. His name was Alfred Nobel and he is remembered today by the great Nobel Prize.

Just as Alfred Nobel got in touch with his feelings and redefined his values, we should step back and contemplate on the question - '*How would you like to be remembered?*'

One who has imbibed the virtue of loving kindness has indeed learnt the true art of living.

- Acharya Shriram Sharma



Glimpses of active participation of AWGP in celebrating IYD at Shantikunj, Haridwar and tree plantation as a positive initiative on this occasion



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